Commentary

VOLUME EIGHTY-EIGHT • NUMBER SIX • DECEMBER 1989

A SPECIAL REPORT

Affirmative Action: A Worldwide Disaster

Thomas Sowell

Between Passovers / Ruth R. Wisse

Does the Piano Have a Future? / Samuel Lipman

The Intellectuals & the Cold War / George Szamuely

Reclaiming Yeats / Robert Richman

"Professor of Terror": An Exchange / Edward Alexander & Critics

Books in Review: Eliot A. Cohen / Richard John Neuhaus / Jonathan Rosen / Michael J. Neth / Richard Pipes

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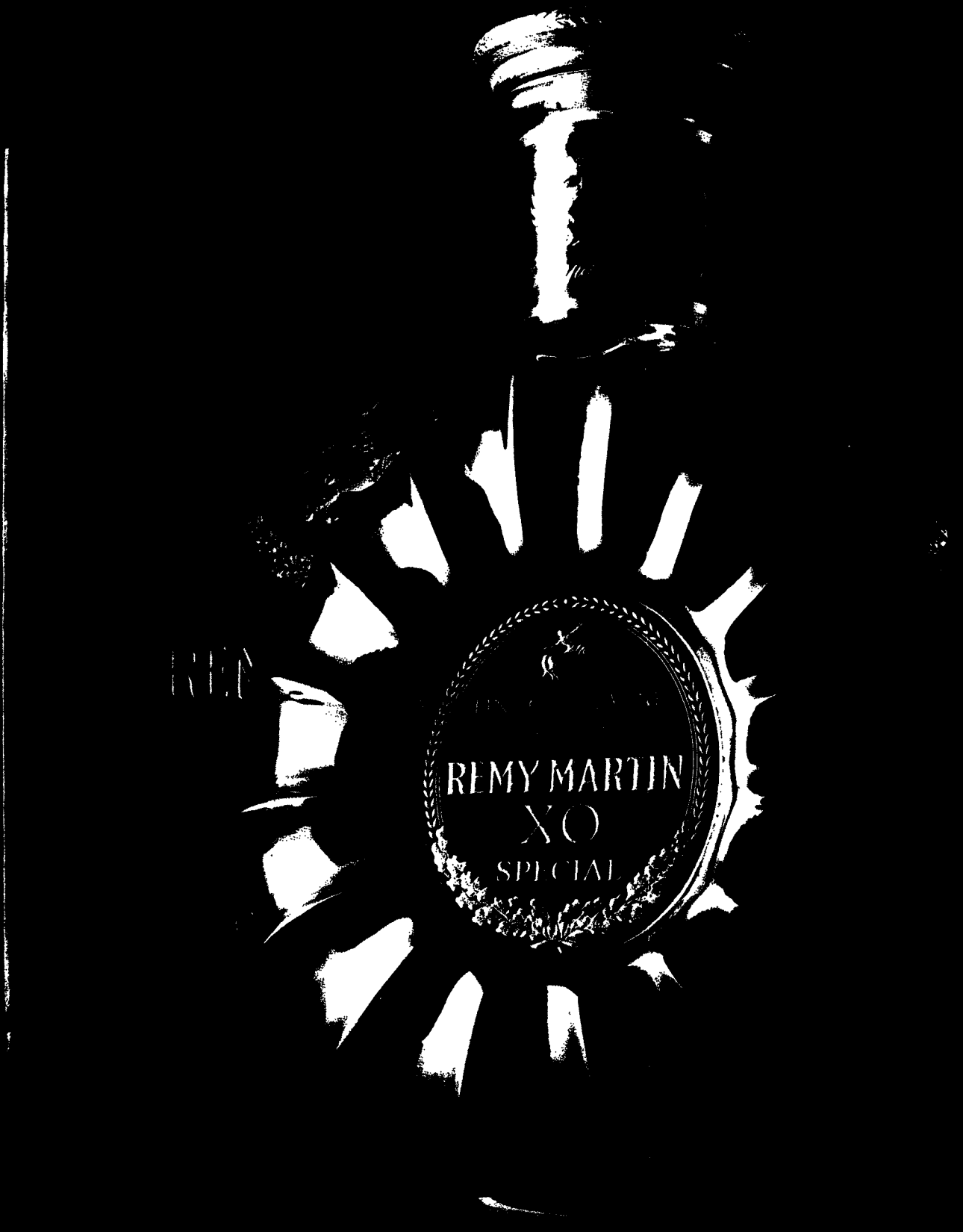

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Letters from Readers

"Professor of Terror"

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am appalled by "Professor of Terror," Edward Alexander's diatribe against Edward Said [August]. To portray Said as a devotee of terrorist politics is a gross distortion of his life's work as a scholar and militant. My main reaction to Mr. Alexander's mean-spirited attack is more one of sadness than anger.

Of course, these are difficult times for Palestinians (and for compassionate Israelis as well). Recently an academic colleague from Hebrew University wrote to me about how difficult it had become for him to live in a country whose leadership condones the daily killing of Palestinian children at close range. Having been to Gaza and the West Bank during the course of the *intifada*, I can confirm that these are truly horrific times for the Palestinian people. I share Said's insistence that this is not the time to recall the Holocaust or prior Jewish suffering. The burden of moral clarity is especially heavy on Jewish intellectuals, which helps account for Said's fury over Robert J. Griffin's scholarly hocus-pocus that has the evident intentions of shifting a reader's sense of outrage to Palestinian misdeeds such as alleged violence against those Palestinians who have chosen to collaborate with Israeli occupation authorities. I would not deny that Said's language of response to Griffin, in the Spring 1989 issue of *Critical Inquiry*, was in places intemperate, even excessive, but it hardly warrants Mr. Alexander's overkill.

Said has been highly effective in expressing the Palestinian case to American and European audiences in recent years. He is widely respected in academic circles, and was one of two Palestinians called upon to meet with the United States Secretary of State a year ago. Despite the pain and anguish he experiences over the persisting torment of the Palestinian people, Said's outlook continues to be anchored on his hopes for *peace* and *reconciliation*. In his important book, *The Question of Palestine*, Said writes toward the end, "Nothing that I have said . . . must be understood except as an acknowledgment of Palestinian and of Jewish history—in fierce conflict with each other for a period of time, but fundamentally reconcilable if both peoples make the attempt to see each other within a common historical perspective," and again, "More Palestinians than ever speak in *positive* detail of what the future must bring for Jews and Arabs alike." Such statements are even more impressive if it is realized that when made they were against the PLO/Palestinian current, preceding by several years Arafat's more accommodating recent postures.

Casting a Palestinian humanist and moderate such as Edward Said in the role of inveterate terrorist is to disrupt Palestinian/Israeli dialogue at the very time when it should be nourished. In this regard, Mr. Alexander is the true terrorist, perpetrating linguistic acts of indiscriminate violence against a courageous and compassionate person whom many of us value especially because he has not let his Palestinian commitment become the basis of a politics of enmity.

RICHARD A. FALK
Princeton University
Princeton, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

As Jews (two Israeli and one American) and as teachers of the humanities, we feel called upon not to let Edward Alexander's "Professor of Terror" pass without comment. We would like to believe that the communities to which we belong, including the community of Jews and the community of humanists, are capable of civilized dialogue. Mr. Alexander claims to speak for both. But his needlessly *ad hominem* and indeed hysterically slanderous outpouring against Edward Said suggests that even minimal standards of truthfulness and civility have no place in his idea of civilization.

Though our political disagreements with Mr. Alexander are not the crucial issue, we cannot allow the murderous vacuity of his title to stand unopposed. We fail to understand how dropping bombs on villages and routinely blowing up families, or shooting a neighbor who merely pokes his head out the window during an armed abduction on foreign soil, does not count for him as "terrorism." We fail to understand how Mr. Alexander can associate this term with Edward Said, who has put himself at considerable personal risk in cham-

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pioning positions of moderation and in condemning human-rights abuses throughout the Arab world, while he himself ignores the pile of corpses to which Israel's occupying forces are adding every day.

On the more recent issue of collaborators—which, from the first sentence on, Mr. Alexander clearly offers as a diversion from the overwhelming and unbearable reality of daily murder by the Israeli army—we refer the reader to the parallel case of France under Nazi occupation. If the Nazis had won, we would have heard their historians complaining for decades, in just Mr. Alexander's accents, about the terrible injustices committed by the Resistance, even against Frenchmen whose only crime was to aid the forces of the Reich.

Mr. Alexander's article is dangerous above all in its attempt to suppress the dialogue that has already been engaged between moderate Israelis and Palestinians such as Edward Said. Is it possible that Mr. Alexander is more terrified at the prospect of peace than he is of unending warfare? If not, why would he so incoherently attack an intellectual who has consistently expressed sympathy for and comprehension of Jewish history and the Jewish perspective? In *The Question of Palestine,* Said writes:

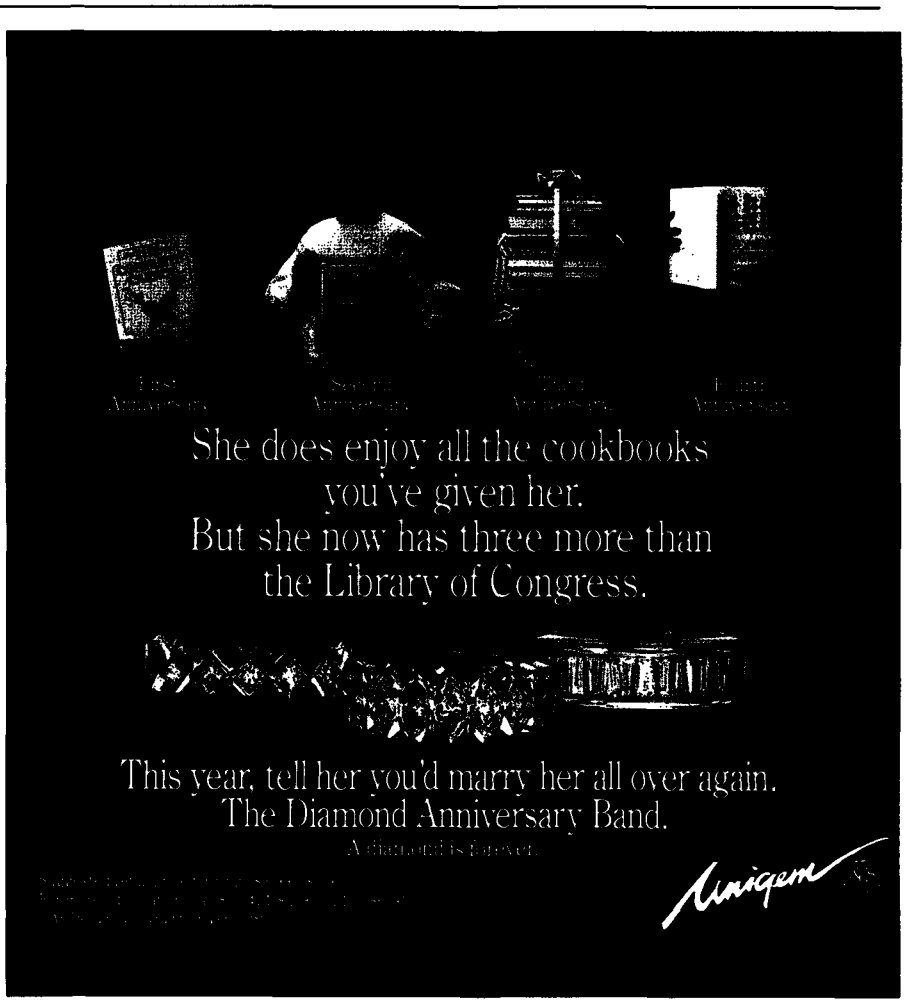
> I have been directly exposed to those aspects of Jewish history and experience that have mattered singularly for Jews and Western non-Jews reading and thinking about Jewish history. I know as well as any educated Western non-Jew can know, what anti-Semitism has meant for the Jews, especially in this century. Consequently I can understand the intertwined terror and exultation out of which Zionism has been nourished, and I think I can at least grasp the meaning of Israel for Jews, and even for the enlightened Western liberal.

Has Mr. Alexander ever made an equivalent gesture, ever expended the slightest energy toward understanding the Palestinian perspective? Or is he content with the Orientalist prejudice that all Palestinians are terrorists by definition, perhaps especially those who hide behind a Western mask?

It would be amusing, were it not so tragic, to contemplate the clear annoyance of a certain Jewish establishment at the emergence of Edward Said into academic and media prominence. That he is singled out for attack is symptomatic. There are many other legitimate Palestinian (and non-Palestinian, including Israeli) scholars and intellectuals who take a position similar to his. But Said is not academically confined to "Middle East Studies." He is a celebrated authority on *Western* culture. In its worldliness his writing has much in common with the work of the so-called "New York (Jewish) intellectuals." Is Mr. Alexander suggesting that no matter how intimate with Western culture Said might be, the mere fact of his Arab "blood" disqualifies his scholarship?

A further issue is the standard of debate to which Mr. Alexander sinks. Is it necessary to call a political opponent a liar? As it happens, when Mr. Alexander refers to Edward Said's "habit of confidently reciting the most preposterous falsehoods"—a statement for which one might well take him to court—he himself is drowning the issue in falsehood upon falsehood. The United Nations Charter does not explicitly mention collaboration. (Edward Said never said it did.) But basing itself on that Charter, specifically Articles 1 and 55, the United Nations has repeatedly, in various declarations, condemned occupations and recognized the right of peoples to resist them. If Mr. Alexander had "searched" in a more scholarly spirit, he would have found more than "one word about resistance to foreign occupation," and he would perhaps have hesitated before insinuating that his opponent is a liar.

This personal animus is sickening, especially to all those, like us, who know Edward Said as a dedicated, inspiring, and responsible teacher and scholar. And at the same time it is fascinating. For it reveals a fundamental desire not to recognize, to will into nonexistence, any human being who can stand up and defend, from within the Western humanist tradition, the Palestinian people and its desire for nationhood. Mr. Alexander's attack on Edward Said is of a piece with his scorn for the concept of the intellectual, which is of a piece in turn with the Israeli policy of arresting and deporting from the occupied territories all


She does enjoy all the cookbooks
you've given her.
But she now has three more than
the Library of Congress.
This year, tell her you'd marry her all over again.
The Diamond Anniversary Band.

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Palestinians who speak up for their fellows. If you don't want to listen, you say that representatives don't exist, or you call those representatives liars. But it is time for the American Jewish community to recognize that there are Palestinian people who have to be talked to and listened to. The desperation of Mr. Alexander's attack, and of COMMENTARY's decision to print it, may perhaps be attributed to the growing majority of American Jews who agree. . . .

YERACH GOVER
Jewish Theological Seminary
BRUCE ROBBINS
Rutgers University
ELLA SHOHAT
CUNY-Staten Island

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

I am amazed that you would print such a masterpiece of obfuscation as Edward Alexander's "Professor of Terror." The very title announces its prejudiced collection of disinformation, and the article lives up to the title: sound and fury, signifying nothing except the author's bias.

First Mr. Alexander presents a collection of gossip, totally unverified and unverifiable, designed to illustrate his proposition that the Palestinians are subhuman, and then he proposes his final solution: the silencing of the most eloquent proponent of peace in the Middle East, Edward Said, who has the temerity to suggest that a solution might be reached between Israel and Palestine based on rational negotiation.

The gist of Mr. Alexander's attack on Edward Said, since he can find no concrete evidence, is the accusation that this professor must be a terrorist because he wrote about an author (Joseph Conrad) who, in turn, had written about a "Professor, whose thoughts 'caressed the images of ruin and destruction.'" What clearer proof do we need? Bravo, Mr. Alexander. Adolf Eichmann would be proud of you: you've established guilt by association. . . .

Said, who is not a member of the PLO as Mr. Alexander's article suggests, is a dedicated educator, the Parr Professor of Comparative Literature at Columbia, respected nationally and internationally for his brilliant work in literary criticism and informative political works meant to contribute toward an understanding which can bring about peace in the Middle East. He is also a noted music critic, an accomplished pianist and dedicated family man, the last to deserve the libelous slanders of an Alexander.

Mr. Alexander concludes with an attack on the intellectual capacity of readers of *Critical Inquiry*: a fitting conclusion to his morass of misinformed verbiage. Instead of accusing innocents of terrorism, he should look at people like Yitzhak Shamir, a member of the Stern Gang and directly implicated in the assassination of the United Nations mediator Count Folke Bernadotte. Who is responsible for the bombing of Lebanon? And the kidnapping of Sheik Obeid?

Many of my friends and colleagues will be writing you with similar indignation at your printing such trash. Of course, you can consign us all to silence: eliminate the "other" by suppression. Eventually this may make your readership a very small club indeed.

MARIANNE MCDONALD
University of California
Irvine, California

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

We are not surprised by your publication of Edward Alexander's "Professor of Terror." Mr. Alexander is the co-editor of a collection of essays drawn from a conference in Jerusalem (1985), the purpose of which, as stated in the editors' introduction, is to found "an Institute for Advanced Strategic and Policy Studies." The agenda for this Institute is to act as a "continuation" of what the editors see as "two extraordinary and powerful currents of Jewish non-liberalism." One current is "Leo Strauss and two generations of his students"; the other, "on the policy side," is none other than your magazine. Thus Mr. Alexander aligns himself with your publication, judging it to be, along with his Institute, a custodian of "Jewish non-liberalism" which will "resist ruin and defeat in the West."

Critical Inquiry, on the other hand, seems to be part of such ruin and defeat, having been dismissed by Mr. Alexander as a journal which typically harbors "moldy futilities" (one assumes that here he is exempting his colleague and ally, Robert J. Griffin).

In his article, Mr. Alexander hallucinates on several counts, not the least of which is that *Critical Inquiry* somehow provides the answer to his question of how and by whose order the "killing of 'collaborators'" occurs in Israel—either by local freelance operators or "on orders from the PLO abroad." The answer, it seems, is the latter, and in the form of the spring issue of *Critical Inquiry*. This assumption would be libelous were it not demented.

It is curious that Mr. Alexander goes to such lengths to worry about what impression our futile pages make on our readers. How can they be expected to distinguish, as he wishes them to, between "tautology and absurdity," how can they even be instructed, as Mr. Alexander wants them to be, "to encourage moral and humane understanding," if their choice of intellectual stimulation is comprised of such useless drivel? One wonders, on the other hand, how futile our enterprise can finally be, since Mr. Alexander has accused us of sending high-level political policy abroad, with no small consequences.

We grieve to be reminded that figures like Edward Alexander inhabit American (or Israeli) universities. More importantly, however, we grieve that the representation of the Jewish people can lie in the hands of such reckless spokesmen who, in the guise of preserving "sweetness and light" in the "West," succeed in producing a rhetoric of smear, misrepresentation, and pernicious innuendo.

Mr. Alexander is quick to use Joseph Conrad for his own ends, citing *The Secret Agent* in snippets. Let us amplify one of these snippets which, in its fullness, appropriately though unfortunately describes Mr. Alexander and his desperate agenda:

> And the incorruptible Professor walked, too, averting his eyes from the odious multitude of mankind. He had no future. He disdained it. He was a force. His thoughts caressed the images of ruin and destruction. He walked frail, insignificant, shabby, miserable—and terrible in the simplicity of his idea calling madness and despair to the regeneration of the world. Nobody looked at him. He passed on unsuspected and deadly, like a pest in the street full of men.

THE EDITORS OF *Critical Inquiry*
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

By publishing Edward Alexander's article, COMMENTARY shows once again how the pro-Israeli,

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Zionist forces contend for public opinion not by means of reason but invective and misrepresentation. Is it not exquisitely ironic that Mr. Alexander assaults Edward Said in the name of Arnold's "sweetness and light," just those values the great Englishman invoked to defend the exclusion of the powerless from the privileges of the powerful? Many of us who abhor Israeli violence against the Palestinians have tried for some time to show how hypocritical are the so-called "humanists" who appeal to the West's supposed "highest values" as a mask for their violent assaults upon marginal peoples. Is it not also charmingly ironic that Mr. Alexander's tactic is to tar Said with the brush of literary theory just as he hopes to tar theorists with the supposed guilt of Said's putative "terrorism"?

Presumably Mr. Alexander would have it that we theorists admire Said because theory has addled our brains and we cannot ferret out a terrorist in our midst. Let me assure Mr. Alexander that he has mistaken the problem: we know a terrorist when we see one; we know when hired servants combine the cheapest rhetorical tactics with the narrowest prejudices to appeal to people's worst emotions. Let him appeal to Arnold; Mr. Alexander's own article indicates full well that he and his sponsors have abandoned reason, justice, and truth in their competition for political and cultural authority: this is why they slur Said to deny him and his people any cultural legitimacy. That having done so, he and his friends then have the nerve to accuse their enemies of their own nasty tricks—well, this is a tactic we all know from the worst moments in history.

One takes some humorous comfort in reading this article: Said's analyses of the representation of Palestinians and of the use of "terrorism" in the Western press are once more proven correct. How shortsighted of Mr. Alexander to have developed his "critique" in the very terms that prove his enemy to have been right all along.

PAUL A. BOVÉ
Editor, *boundary 2*
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward Alexander accuses Edward Said of "misrepresentation." But his own piece is an exercise in innuendo. By force of suggestion. Said's strongly worded essay in *Critical Inquiry* is supposed to be "giving orders for killing." A televised shot of Said speaking to Arafat out of range of the microphone is supposed to prove that he is a terrorist. Said's words for Palestinian solidarity are twisted out of context into an endorsement of violence.

Edward Said is a distinguished member of a profession to which Edward Alexander also belongs. Mr. Alexander suggests that Said's professional distinction is undeserved. . . . This is as derisive as it is to call him a "Professor of Terror." Said's political analysis, like his critical writing, is, rather, informed by concern for the oppressed.

GAYATRI CHAKRAVORTY SPIVAK
University of Pittsburgh
Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward Alexander's article was, at best, grossly caricaturing and misleading, and, at worst, highly offensive. His rather unsubtle design was to leave the following image in the minds of his readers: a cartoon caricature of Edward Said as a bloodthirsty monster, fangs bared and dripping with freshly drawn Jewish or collaborating Palestinian blood, with claws, horns, an exaggeratedly hooked nose, all in the best anti-Semitic tradition. . . .

Mr. Alexander . . . conjures up some sort of imaginary world, a hypothetical situation in which Palestinians (with Edward Said somehow at their head) rule the Jewish world, and are in a position to decide how Jews should be treated. The urgent moral question of the day is: in this make-believe situation, how might he/they treat Jews? Might they treat them the way they seem to justify treating Palestinian collaborators?

While Mr. Alexander ponders the moral questions of this imaginary situation, the *actual* and all-too-tangible reality is that Israeli Jews are *at the present time* in the real situation of ruling over a Palestinian population, and making daily decisions about how Palestinians are to be treated. There is no need to wonder how they *might* treat Palestinians. The daily decisions include such "non-issues" (in Mr. Alexander's world) as: systematically breaking the bones . . . of men, women, and children; when to use rubber (*sic*) bullets, and when to use "live" bullets on unarmed civilians; demolishing homes; deportation; cutting off water and food supplies; shooting and/or beating to death—just to name a very few. Indulging in the hypothetical, while ignoring and thus denying such a reality is morally reprehensible. . . .

CAROL BARDENSTEIN
Dartmouth College
Hanover, New Hampshire

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward Alexander's verbal savaging of Edward Said is an inept and intemperate attempt at character assassination. . . .

In the dogmatic domain of too many self-styled "defenders of Israel," it is by definition metaphysically impossible to consider Israel capable of terror and atrocity. We are all aware of this theological impossibility for those who believe, as more than one rabbi has put it, that "It is forbidden to kill a Jew but not a Gentile."

Even in the real world in America, though not in Europe or even Israel, the major mass media and most of the intellectual establishment have neither seriously considered the notion that Israel engages in terrorism, nor uttered the accusation of terrorism against Israel. . . . However, the myth of the purity of Israeli intentions and actions is becoming less and less credible. . . .

If the charge of terrorist can be made to stick to Edward Said because of his indignation at the one-sided rhetoric that has justified innumerable acts of terror against innocent Palestinians, then only the most prejudiced and obtuse can fail to identify as terrorist those who have poured oceans of ink to justify and falsify the history of atrocities heaped upon the Palestinian people during the twenty-two years of repressive occupation . . . and the past twenty months of beatings, curfews, detentions, deportations, demolition of homes, expulsions, killings, land expropriations, suppression of professional, social, and trade organizations, as well as other mayhem. . . .

The Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, August 1949, requires a country occupying a foreign territory to treat the population in the territory humanely. The United States contends that the Fourth Ge-

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neva Convention applies to Israel and our own State Department's "Country Reports Concerning Human-Rights Practices" listed a host of Israeli abuses. But, of course, Israel shrugs it off and its misguided apologists wink at the abuses of human rights and walk through the moral dung in their visits to the "promised land," some holding their noses and others not, and some shaking their heads and others stoically indifferent to the phenomenon. . . .

It is distressing and saddening to watch so-called intellectuals employ invective with more concern for the appearances of truth than for its substance. The rhetorical distortions degrade rational debate just as immoral behavior degrades morality.

RICHARD GALLO
East Islip, New York

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Edward Alexander keeps saying one thing: don't listen to English professors. They meddle in politics. They have odd and dangerous ideas, and produce the "moldy futilities" found in academic journals. But Mr. Alexander is himself an English professor who clearly meddles in politics. The logic of his article demands that we not listen to him.

Whatever one thinks of Edward Said, who happens to be highly respected in his field, it is obvious that he is not a self-hating intellectual like Mr. Alexander. However, I suspect Mr. Alexander considers himself first and last a champion of what he calls "humanistic values"—"humanistic" because they are his, though they also reflect a highly charged political tendency. To compare (as he does) the Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Gaza with the American occupation of postwar Germany and Japan—our occupation did not last twenty-plus years, nor did it produce civilian deaths by the hundreds—is outrageous.

Let's at least be honest about it. Mr. Alexander is a man wielding a political hatchet. . . .

STEPHEN MENICK
Washington, D.C.

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

A colleague of mine recently called my attention to the article, "Professor of Terror," in which Edward Alexander so scurrilously attacks Edward Said. . . .

Mr. Alexander's exercise in invective was remarkable for its display of poor reading skills, incompetent scholarship, and a lack of critical acumen. I write to you as a professor of English myself, and a member of the U.S. academy, and I would remind you that Edward Said's work has been of seminal significance for an entire generation of scholars and students of literature, critical theory, and cultural studies in this country and abroad. Given the importance of that work and Said's exemplary contributions to such reputable journals as *Critical Inquiry*, where he has forthrightly engaged the political and historical responsibility of the academic, the continued intellectual irresponsibility of COMMENTARY in these matters, so egregiously exhibited in Mr. Alexander's article, is particularly regrettable.

BARBARA HARLOW
University of Texas
Austin, Texas

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward Alexander's "Professor of Terror" is a long overdue exposé of the most egregious *poseur* in American letters, Edward Said. Said's unprincipled screed against Robert J. Griffin and the Boyarin brothers in the Spring 1989 issue of *Critical Inquiry*, which discovers new depths of the *ad-hominem* argument, is the latest installment in his increasingly shrill ideological assault upon what he calls "Israeli-Zionist brutality and inhumanity." It is remarkable both for its unremitting savagery and its revealing glimpse into a mind that is (to quote the poet Shelley) "pinnacled dim in the intense inane." Evidently Said (who, conveniently enough, sits on the editorial board of the journal he has transformed into his own envenomed jeremiad) has learned well one lesson of our time: trumpet your cause loudly, hysterically even, and soon enough a good many will listen, even if your message is one of hatred and bloodshed.

In his article Mr. Alexander highlights some of the inconsistencies of Said's position and demolishes a great deal of the flimsy edifice supporting it, but I should like to add one or two observations to his. First, it is an irony unremarked even by Mr. Alexander (who correctly illuminates his subject's own racism) that Said's dual career, as intellectual hit-man for the PLO and Parr Professor of English and Comparative Literature at Columbia University, offers a striking example of precisely the sort of "antinomies" that Said himself has always been fond of pointing out in the work of the novelist Joseph Conrad. One of Said's well-known arguments about Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is that it embodies a series of dualities (darkness and light, savagery and civilization, etc.) which are unresolved, and within which cause can no longer be distinguished from effect. The surreal world of the African jungle becomes for Said the perfect metaphor to express Conrad's world view: just as, in the depths of the jungle, day gradually and imperceptibly fades into night, so decency is transformed into plunder and murder, and rationality (in the character of Kurtz) into madness.

How fittingly this notion describes the course of Edward Said's own schizophrenic career! For what else is one to say about a man who lectures of an afternoon to rows of bright, well-intentioned undergraduates, or boasts about his classical piano technique, and then, perhaps the very next day, attends a meeting of the Palestinian National Council which proceeds to reaffirm the murderous policy of reprisal against Palestinian "collaborators" (read: nonpolitical shopkeepers on the West Bank trying to feed their families by keeping open their shops)? And which Edward Said are we to believe—the teacher or the ideologue? Perhaps, like one of my students, Said has creatively misread Kurtz's last words in *Heart of Darkness* ("The horror! The horror!") as "Hooray! Hooray!"

But what is more likely (and more disturbing) is that Edward Said is entirely rational, that his advocacy of his cause even beyond the point of shamelessly embracing terror is a carefully and dispassionately adopted position. Otherwise, the unique juxtapositions one finds in his unreadable "theoretical" criticism are simply incomprehensible. Here, after all, is a critic who, within the covers of one book, has praised with equal avidity James Joyce, a brilliant writer dedicated to universal tolerance and an almost mystical principle of love, and Frantz Fanon, the African apostle of violence and author of *The Wretched of the Earth* whom

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Allan Bloom has rightly described as "a demonstrably inferior and derivative thinker" whose bloodthirsty fantasies Said has unequivocally endorsed. Only a mind incapable of perceiving (or unwilling to confront) such grotesqueries as Fanon's for what they are could sincerely imply that Israel's resistance to the *intifada* matches and even exceeds the barbarity of Nazi genocide.

Said's treatment of Griffin in his broadside in *Critical Inquiry* suggests the inconsistencies that the devoted ideologue casually ignores. After the tirade of personal abuse against Griffin from which Mr. Alexander quotes, Said for the remainder of the piece refers to his victim as "'Griffin.'" These quotation marks, throwing into doubt as they do the existence, the very humanity, of his adversary, are the deconstructive literary critic's way of annihilating inconvenient realities. They demonstrate that Said (like all who have sold themselves to a cause) believes the world has no inherent meaning or significance—except, of course, whichever one he chooses to impose upon it. Truth, goodness, value, and all other such outmoded, "colonial-imperial" terms mean nothing—except what he declares them to mean. That staggering contradiction, that fanatical egotism are at the heart of the ideologue's endeavor, and this is a truth no amount of incoherent burblings about *cultural difference, affiliative theory, post-structuralist discourse,* and all the other verbal paraphernalia of this fashion-bound, self-proclaimed "oppositional critic" can conceal.

Edward Said will not rest until Israel degenerates into a chaotic inferno like present-day Lebanon. As we take every possible precaution to forestall it, we can only hope such a tragedy will not occur. Edward Alexander and the editors of COMMENTARY are determined that it shall not, and those to whom reason and progress remain more than useless abstractions, and to whom life itself signifies something more than flesh for cannon fodder, owe them a vote of thanks for publishing this article.

ARTHUR M. NEWMAN
Chicago, Illinois

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

It is difficult to understand what Edward Alexander wants from Edward Said. All Said is trying to do is make it up the corporate ladder of a six-billion-dollar multinational company by taking his cues from the higher-ups. His president, Yasir Arafat, an international celebrity who established the company twenty-five years ago, has repeatedly declared that he opposes terrorism and that he has never practiced it. He has also taken credit for hijacking and bombing civilian planes, and for eliminating children in schools, worshippers in synagogues, and civilians in buses, restaurants, and marketplaces.

Until 1976, Arafat denied that he had anything to do with the Black September organization. Then it was revealed that he was Black September's supreme commander, and that in a telephone conversation (which was taped) he personally gave the order to execute two American diplomats (and one Belgian) who had been taken hostage by Black September in Khartoum.

When Israel invaded Lebanon in 1982, Arafat announced that 600,000 refugees had escaped southern Lebanon, and that 10,000 civilians had been killed by the Israeli army. The total population of the area was 400,000 and the total number of civilian dead was around 400. Last year there was a disturbance around the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem in which a few people, mostly Israeli policemen, were slightly injured. The same evening Arafat announced on Baghdad radio that 130 Muslim worshippers had been butchered by the Israeli military. Earlier this year Arafat announced in Geneva that the Palestinian Covenant, which calls for Israel's destruction, was null and void. In the recent Fatah conference he declared its inviolability.

The number-two man in the company, Abu Iyad, tries hard to outdo his boss. A couple of weeks ago he denied that Black September existed at all, and said it was a figment of the Western media's imagination. Which reminded those with memories that are longer than is currently fashionable that in 1972 a PLO executive said on the David Susskind television show that the Israeli athletes in Munich "were massacred by the Israelis and the Germans to make the Arabs look bad."

Not to be outdone, number-three in the company, Farouk Kaddoumi, announced before the UN in November 1985 that Leon Klinghoffer was not murdered by the hijackers of the *Achille Lauro* but by Mrs. Klinghoffer.

Now really, Mr. Alexander, if *you* were an executive who aspired to reach the top in this company, would you jeopardize advancement by sullying your lips with the truth?

DAVID BAR-ILLAN
Jerusalem, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward Said's works . . . reflect his proclivity to bypass hard truths. . . . In *Orientalism,* Said expresses the view that Oriental studies are a mere Western-willed political enterprise. . . . Interestingly, some of Said's Arab critics, like Sadiq Jalal al-'Azm and Nadim al-Bitar, have recoiled from his gross generalizations concerning Orientalism and consider Said's demonizing crusade unworthy of serious scholarship.

In *The Question of Palestine,* Said . . . pursues his vitriolic diatribes. . . . For Said, Zionism is merely "a European project in Palestine" and Israel is nothing but a "colonial settler-state." . . . Moreover, Said is brazen in brandishing the audacious notion that "the Palestinian mission is a mission of peace." Ask the thousands of Jewish, Lebanese, Palestinian, American, and other victims of PLO terrorism for their opinion of this assertion. . . . The PLO exercises—with Said's full concurrence—coercive rule through terror. It is not a new Palestinian mode: from 1936 to 1939 in particular, rival Arab gangs fought one another, assassination and anarchy were rampant, as the appetite for plunder and the passion for *jihad* combined to set Arab against Arab in Palestine—and always with the cry of collaboration wailing in the wind. So now—oblivious of mumblings about Palestinian democracy, equality, rights, tolerance, and coexistence about to flourish in the state of Palestine (itself just a word, not a reality)—the gun, the axe, and the knife wield their horrific ways . . . as the PLO publicly assumes responsibility for the deaths of at least 125 "collaborators." . . .

Edward Alexander has done a great service in exposing the professorial façade of Edward Said. . . . The article is a monument of truth in a cynical age.

MORDECHAI NISAN
Hebrew University
Jerusalem, Israel

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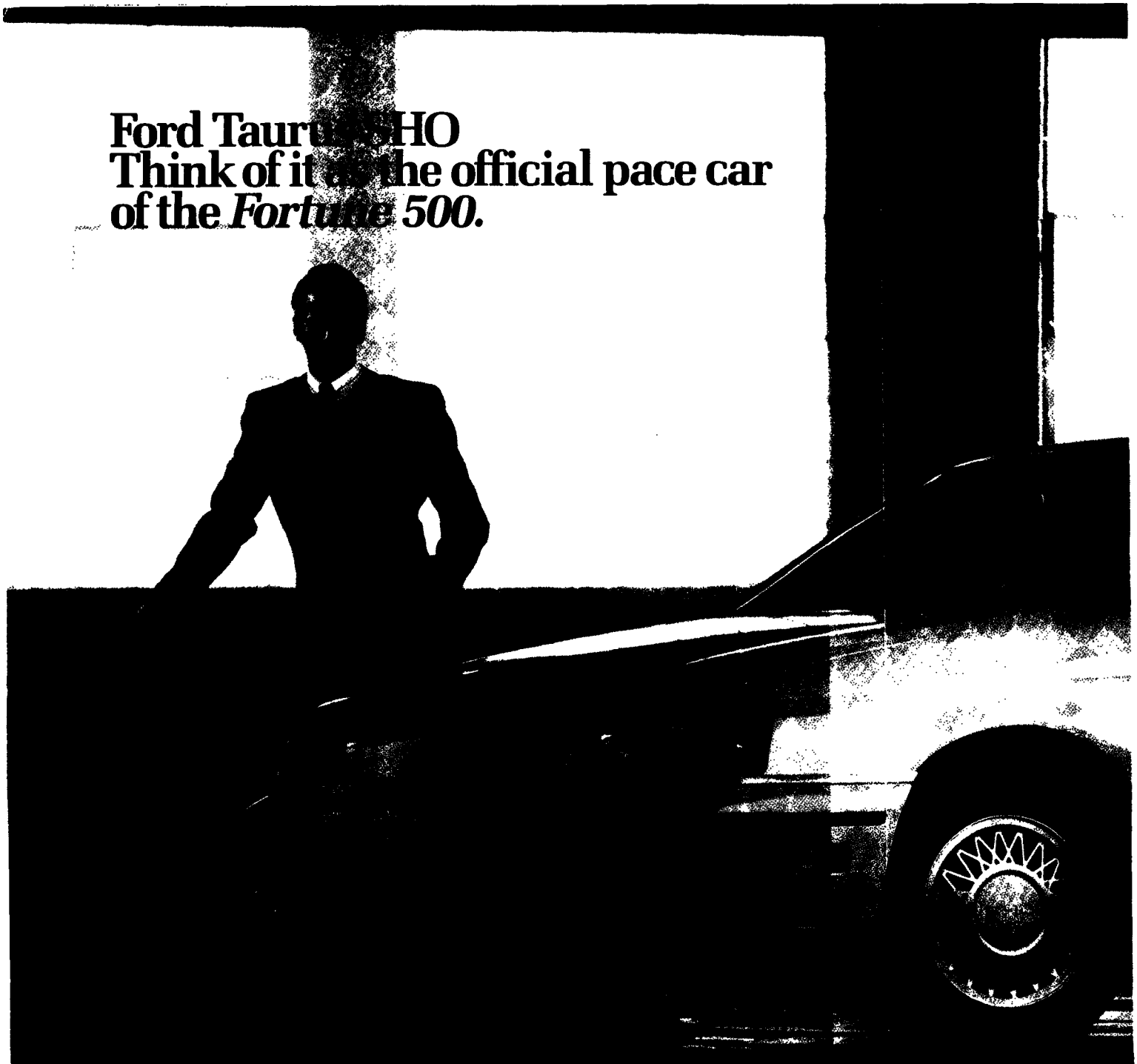

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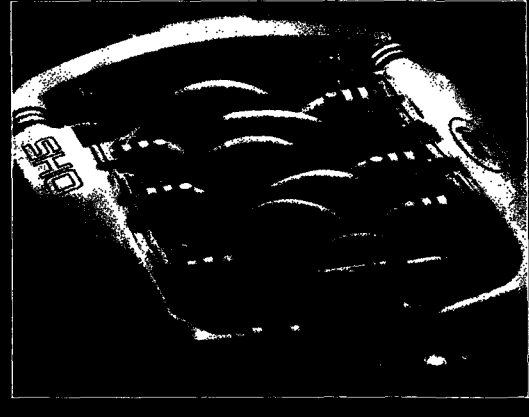

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TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

Edward Alexander refers to Edward Said's "longstanding habit of confidently reciting the most preposterous falsehoods." Anyone who doubts the accuracy of this statement should read the interview with Said that appeared last year in the radical journal *Red Bass* (#12), which contains the following:

- Asked about the absence of free speech in Arab countries, Said insists that "There isn't a lack of free speech everywhere [in the Arab world]."
- Referring to the killings at the Sabra and Shatilla refugee camps, Said claims that fatalities may have numbered in the "thousands"—in reality, the number was 460.
- Said complains that while "the Israelis have a superpower totally supporting them," the PLO has "never had anything equivalent"—neglecting to mention the massive support given the PLO by the Soviet Union, Communist China, and the entire Arab League.
- Said even asserts that there is "democracy" in the Palestinian refugee camps when anyone who has read a newspaper in the past two years knows that PLO supporters deal with Arabs whom they dislike by, among other things, hanging them from electricity poles or silencing them with meat cleavers.

Mr. Alexander and COMMENTARY deserve thanks for stating the obvious about Edward Said, especially since few others today are prepared to do so.

BERTRAM KORN, JR.
Committee for Accuracy in
Middle East Reporting
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

. . . Despite his disdain for the impartial search for the truth, his uncontrollable antagonism toward the West, and his blatant anti-Americanism, Edward Said is treated with great respect by the American media and the American government—for example, his meeting with the American Secretary of State. And why is there no concern with the fact that his book, *Covering Islam,* viciously attacked a broad range of American institutions and professions—the universities and their scholars, businessmen, journalists, those in the government, and so forth? . . .

In a speech to the 1980 convention of Arab-American University Graduates, Said criticized the Middle East oil countries for not taking advantage of the financial difficulties of Random House, the *Nation,* and the London *Times* by buying them and using them to disseminate pro-Arab material in the West. Again, his affinities and priorities were revealed, but he was never attacked for them. . . .

But in Europe, where there is widespread support among intellectuals for Said's anti-Israel political agenda, there has always been some awareness that he is no scholar. In the London *Times Literary Supplement* M. E. Yapp, author of several scholarly books on the Middle East, wrote that a major feature of Said's *Orientalism* is "straightforward misrepresentation." Regarding *Covering Islam,* widely used in American undergraduate courses, Yapp noted that Said's interpretation is ". . . a complete distortion" and attacked Said's "cavalier approach to evidence." "One is not surprised," Yapp concluded, "that he should be so hostile to the idea of objective knowledge." . . .

STEPHEN KARETZKY
Clifton, New Jersey

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

When the cultural history of our era is written, we are confident that Edward Alexander will find an honored place among those scholars who fought hard to arrest the regressive slide of our universities toward a medieval, repressive intolerance, in which the fashions of the Left threatened to harden into ecclesiastical dogma. In the 70's and early 80's the true believers of the Left were embraced by the academy and encouraged to disseminate their views. . . . While Jeane J. Kirkpatrick was unwelcome, the podiums in our elite colleges and graduate schools belonged to the likes of Billie Boggs and Edward Said. Those who ventured to observe after her appearance at Harvard that Billie Boggs was not a sociologist but a psychotic were met with derision, while those who noticed that Edward Said was not a humane scholar but an apologist for terrorists were shouted down. No doubt Mr. Alexander will have to endure a similar response, but he can take satisfaction from being in the vanguard of those . . . working to reverse the tide and restore a balanced view of reality to the university. . . .

STEPHEN M. RITTENBERG
HERBERT M. WYMAN
New York City

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

With all of Israel's current problems, it is tempting to believe that better times might be around the corner. Peace can be made, we are told, if only Israel would knock off the paranoia and be reasonable. Nothing, however, arrests the leftward slide across the political spectrum like an encounter with the spokesman for the new PLO and a closer look at moderation, PLO-style. Enter Edward Said.

Surely here is a man with whom differences can be discussed: Oxford-educated, Columbia University professor of literature, author, teacher, passionate advocate of the Palestinian cause. He will appreciate that security is our bottom line, we will convince him of our intention to go to the wall for Palestinian rights, and together there will be an exchange of views. . . .

Instead, we discover Arafat in tweed. We learn from Edward Alexander's piece that Said supports the Zionism-as-racism slander, and that he has trouble staying moderate when challenged even about that. Writing in the scholarly pages of *Critical Inquiry,* Said blasts away at his brother-in-letters, Robert J. Griffin of Tel Aviv University, for having taken issue with him. Said advises readers that Griffin's views are so indecent that he must either be a "political invention" (presumably he means a Mossad plant) or just a nobody who has never published anything about Palestine. Said writes that Griffin should "atone for the crimes he defends" or shut up. . . . Mr. Alexander recounts briefly other statements from Said demonstrating his grasp of Jewish history . . . , such as how early Zionists wished to emulate the Nazis in Palestine and how Israel today practices Nazi methods, including concentration camps.

If Said talks this way to Griffin—Yale Ph.D. and Tel Aviv University literature professor— . . . just imagine what he would say to the rest of us about our anxiety over giving up land for peace. As another nobody who lives in Israel and remembers Said as a Columbia teacher, I cannot believe that the PLO spokesman and insider is on the level with all this. . . . I would prefer to explain it away as vintage 1960's, bash-the-establishment stuff taken literally only by those whose consciousness-raising has worn off. But there it

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is, and even those predisposed to find . . . something (anything!) positive to prove that there is a new spirit of realism in the Palestinian camp are having their heads handed to them by moderates the likes of Said. . . .

Israel today is in a war of siege . . . and Messrs. Griffin and Alexander deserve praise for calling attention to the dangers of wanting to believe too soon that the siege is winding down. Said and others, however, are failing in a role one would like to see intellectuals fulfill: to think sensibly, to articulate . . . their positions so as to engage the empathy, if not necessarily the agreement, of opposing camps, and to lead their constituency in a similar leap of empathy. Part of the justice of Israel's cause today is the fact that Israel and the Jewish world give prominence to such intellectuals—and part of the ongoing tragedy is that they have only Said *et al.* to talk to.

MICHAEL SCHER
Ra'anana, Israel

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

The situation so accurately described in Edward Alexander's article is particularly painful to an Israeli, and even more so to an Israeli academic. Mr. Alexander has captured the frustration and anger that have overtaken us in the face of the overwhelming consensus that now reigns among our colleagues throughout the world, and particularly in the United States—a consensus of condemnation. Every attempt on our part to enlist understanding for the cause of preserving Israel from annihilation and/or Finlandization is rejected, seen as contemptible, and treated with the utmost suspicion. Whereas once we were the apple of the eye of those who sympathized with just causes and the defense of democracy, now our successful stand against the attempts of our Arab neighbors . . . to overrun and destroy us is execrated by the international academic community. We are now incapable of doing right. . . . Not unless we allow, without protest and with all good grace, the creation of what cannot be other than a hostile Palestinian state within our borders will we be allowed (perhaps) a place at the table of the "morally acceptable."

Edward Said is well-known to us as a self-acknowledged opponent, a member of the Palestinian National Council, which has declared publicly

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that all of Israel should be emptied of Jews and given to the Palestinians. Whatever the legitimacy of Said's political views, . . . they have no place in any scholarly journal not devoted to the arguing of political opinion. As William Phillips pointed out in *Partisan Review,* Said's "rough attacks on Israel and on three professors who argued with him . . . sounded more like the work of a street fighter than a scholar." Phillips went on to suggest that Said's vituperative attacks indicate that "he [Said] is high on a sense of power, because his viewpoint has had such wide acceptance."

Yes, in the face of the overwhelming sympathy for the Arab cause, anything goes, including the lies that Mr. Alexander pointed out, and the unscholarly behavior noted by Phillips, not to mention the declared ambition of the Palestinians to destroy us, the continuing, shocking . . . suicide missions directed against helpless Israel civilians, . . . and the slaughter of Arabs by Arabs all around us, in Israel and in Lebanon. And what can we say about the senseless burning just recently of thousands of acres of the only extensive natural forest in the country? . . .

Robert J. Griffin, known here as a liberal rather sympathetic to Arab claims, wrote in the article attacked . . . by Said that the acceptance without protest or response of Said's original article by *Critical Inquiry* "carries special significance. It signals, or can be read as signaling, that the literary and critical establishment has reached a consensus and that liberal supporters of Israel in our discipline have retreated from the field." Not only in your field, Mr. Griffin. . . .

Let me close by saying that we in Israel have not forgotten the Sudetenland and Czechoslovakia, and that for us the Holocaust is more than a questionable description of history. We will resist the creation of an armed and hostile state in our midst. Yes, we rue the loss of sympathy, but not so much as to become suicidal.

ROBERT WERMAN
Hebrew University
Jerusalem, Israel

EDWARD ALEXANDER writes:

People who complain that good causes attract bad advocates should be comforted by the evidence so abundantly provided by Edward Said's acolytes that bad causes attract even worse ones. For many months, hardly a single issue of the New York *Times* has been without an item about the gruesome torture and murder of Palestinian Arab "collaborators" by PLO agents. Arafat himself has announced that "Ten are the bullets of the Revolution. Nine of them are for the collaborators and one for the Zionists." On September 10, after a flurry of killings not "approved" by the underground tribunal, a leaflet from the *intifada* leadership itself said the killing was getting out of hand and urged that "all cadres of the hit teams and popular committees must use control so that we don't lose our discipline because this would allow the enemy to use this phenomenon both in the field and in the media." Nevertheless for Richard A. Falk the whole business is only "alleged violence," and for Marianne McDonald it is "a collection of gossip." Said's explicit call for "dealing severely with" and "punishing" collaborators is for Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak "words for Palestinian solidarity" and, for Paul A. Bové (Miss Spivak's colleague at Pittsburgh) "putative 'terrorism.'"

Carol Bardenstein, still worse off in rural New Hampshire, does not seem to have seen the *Times* in twenty-five years, since she thinks the allegation of a certain lack of charity by the PLO in the *Jewish* direction entirely a matter of "hypothetical" conjecture about an "imaginary world." Apparently she has never heard about the Munich massacre of 1972, or the 1974 attacks on the schoolchildren of Ma'alot and the mothers and babies of Kiryat Shemona, or the 1978 massacre of 35 passengers on a Haifa-Tel Aviv bus, or, in this decade, the shootings at the Rome and Vienna airports, or the attack on 50 Jewish teenage campers in Brussels, or the massacres at synagogues in Antwerp, Brussels, Rome, and Istanbul, or the countless other manifestations, right up to the present, of the PLO definition of every Jewish civilian everywhere as a legitimate target of PLO bombs and bullets. Or perhaps she did hear of these little unpleasantnesses attending the daily life of Jews in Israel and elsewhere, but viewed them as instances of what Said calls "the microscopic grasp that Arafat has of politics, not as grand strategy, in the pompous Kissingerian sense, but as daily, even hourly movement of people and attitudes, in the Gramscian or Foucauldian sense." Brave readers of Foucault's *Madness and Civilization* will recall that he said he wanted his books to be "Molotov cocktails." Evidently, through the agency of Edward Said, the Frenchman's wish is being posthumously realized.

Said's chivalrous defenders call to mind Cicero's saying that there is no absurdity human beings will not resort to in order to defend another absurdity. But the absurdities in these letters are less striking than their tone and tenor. On the one hand we have windy panegyrics for this "dedicated family man" (McDonald), this "courageous and compassionate person whom many of us value" (Falk), this "champion . . . of moderation" (Gover *et al.*). But the counterpoint to these eulogies is a violence of language suggesting precisely the moral disorder that permeates Said's own piece in *Critical Inquiry.* Richard Gallo finds himself awash in "moral dung"; Miss McDonald pronounces me to be the pride of Adolf Eichmann; for Mr. Bové I am a "hired servant" of "Zionist forces"; Stephen Menick discovers that I am "a self-hating intellectual"; the grieving diagnosticians of *Critical Inquiry* call me "demented"; the Israeli/American-Jewish trio of Yerach Gover, Bruce Robbins, and Ella Shohat allege that I "disqualify" Said's scholarship because of his Arab "blood"; and Miss Bardenstein, with an imagination still more lurid and sanguinary, finds in my remarks on Said's claim of a legal right to murder an "anti-Semitic" caricature of "a bloodthirsty monster, fangs bared and dripping with freshly drawn Jewish or collaborating Palestinian blood." Beautiful and touching words, fit tribute to a writer who in the essay in question dismissed one opponent as a subhuman criminal and the writing of another as a "piece of filth," and whose rude, slanging, head-shaking, filibustering TV performances have made him the scourge of adversaries still burdened with vestiges of civility.

Readers of these letters by Said's apologists will have noticed something more than the usual amount of professorial preening and flaunting of "credentials," as when Barbara Harlow tells us that "I write to you as a professor of English myself," or the Gover-Rob-

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bins-Shohat trinity announce themselves "teachers of the humanities." This is probably not an accident. On August 21, not long after my article appeared, Abdeen Jabara, president of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, sent an urgent letter to academic sympathizers, urging them to respond to my "unconscionable piece." The organization, whose national advisory committee includes, among others, Said himself, Richard A. Falk, Mohammad Ali, Noam Chomsky, and Jesse Jackson, told recipients of the letter: "We were outraged by this attack against Dr. Edward Said and feel that the most effective response is to ensure that individuals with professional credentials such as yours respond directly to the magazine." This may explain the peculiar warning from the blustery (but insecure) Miss McDonald that "many of my friends and colleagues will be writing you with similar indignation." Similar indignation, similar sycophancy, and similar prostitution of "professional credentials." It is not a pretty picture.

Not one of the professed belles-lettrists among Said's defenders seems capable of understanding my statement that Said's "double career as literary scholar and ideologue of terrorism is a potent argument against those who believe in the corrective power of humanistic values." Mr. Menick construes this to mean "don't listen to English professors." Miss McDonald takes it to be an assertion that Said "must be a terrorist because he wrote about . . . Joseph Conrad." Miss Spivak, who has been so successful in her struggles against "culture-centrism," "ethnocentrism," and "gender-centrism" that she now wanders through the world of ideas without compass or guide, believes that my confession of waning faith in literature as a means of encouraging humane understanding is an attack on Said's "professional distinction." Miss Shohat and her colleagues, who to problems that demand surgical precision bring the instruments of butchers, allege that I am a sort of Hesperidean dragon guarding the treasures of the wisdom of the West against Arab intruders. Since I have done so poor a job of making myself understood by these humanists, let me quote a more articulate writer on the very same subject. In 1980, Cynthia Ozick wrote: "If, years ago when I was in graduate school, someone had told me that it was possible to be steeped in Joseph Conrad and at the same time be a member of the 'National Council' of a worldwide terror organization I would have doubted this with all the passion for civilization and humane letters that a naive and literature-besotted young person can evidence. I know better now. Professor Said has read *Heart of Darkness,* and it has not educated his heart."

In my essay I gave grudging credit to Said for having passed beyond the commonplace, formulaic analogy between Israelis and Nazis, Arabs and Jews, to plumb new depths of licentious originality by alleging Israel's "occupation" to be even worse than that of the Nazis. His imitators have not caught up with the master. Miss Bardenstein, Miss McDonald, and the Israeli-Jewish triad are still mired in the old inversions, turning Said into a Jew whose *critics* are "anti-Semitic," and ritually sprinkling the word Nazi, like some popular seasoning, over every mention of Israel.

Propagandists for the PLO have long been consumed by resentment that the Jews should be allowed to monopolize all that beautiful Holocaust suffering which it would be so pleasant, *ex post facto,* to share. Those who spread this disease of Holocaust-envy do not see that the compulsive desire of many Palestinian Arabs to appropriate the history and symbols of the Jews is powerful evidence of just how contrived and artificial is the Palestinian sense of national identity. A movement that can conceive of itself only as a mirror image of its enemy is an anti-nation, deriving its main purpose and meaning from the desire to destroy a living nation.

From their letters, I suspect that few of Said's defenders took the trouble to read through his *Critical Inquiry* essay of the spring. A possible exception is Richard Falk, who is a bit nervous about Said's "intemperate, even excessive" language, and whose deep silence on Said's fakery with respect to the UN Charter is, from a scholar of international law, more eloquent than speech. Said claimed that "the UN Charter and every other known document or protocol [!] entitles a people under foreign occupation not only to resist but also by extension to deal severely with collaborators." Yet Gover and Company

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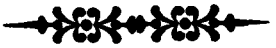

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Tzvetan Todorov, Nationalism
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brazenly declare that Said "never said" that the UN Charter mentions collaboration, and then go on to argue that the United Nations, basing itself on Articles 1 and 55 of the Charter (which say exactly nothing on the topic), has conferred upon people under occupation the right to murder collaborators. This maneuver, very similar to Arafat's trick of periodically declaring that he accepts Security Council Resolutions 242 and 338 (neither of which refers to Palestinians or the Palestinian question), "in the context of all UN resolutions relevant to the Palestinian question," puts one in mind of Swift's statement: "I never wonder to see men wicked, but I often wonder to see them not ashamed." Do Mr. Gover and his friends really suppose that the readers of COMMENTARY do not know the difference between a legal document such as the UN Charter and the hodgepodge of General Assembly resolutions (neither binding on the Security Council nor capable of altering the Charter), pushed through by the automatic Arab-Communist-Third World majority, that condemn Zionism as racism and blame Israel for every evil on the globe?

Neither the UN Charter nor any other legal document authorizes civilians to murder for political or any other reasons except self-defense. The Charter, which Said explicitly invokes in *Critical Inquiry* as the PLO's license for ideological murder, deals only with the international use of official force, which it forbids except in the exercise of a state's right to self-defense, or uses authorized by the Security Council. Article 1 of the Charter lists four broad purposes of the UN: to maintain peace among nations; to develop friendly relations among nations "based on respect for the principle of equal rights and self-determination of peoples, and to take other appropriate measures to strengthen universal peace"; to achieve international cooperation in solving economic and social problems; and to serve as a forum for harmonizing the action of nations in the attainment of these ends. The Charter of the UN has nothing to say about domestic civil wars or insurrections against the recognized governmental authorities of a nation or region. There is no way, even for the disciples of a (reconstructed) deconstructionist like Edward Said, to convert the Charter, which is designed to achieve and protect the peace, into a document authorizing aggressive war.

Israeli and American Jews making the case for the PLO remind one of Dr. Johnson's proverbial dog walking on his hind legs: it is not done well, but you are surprised to see it done at all. Said, of course, thinks otherwise, and has awarded high marks to Ella Shohat for her pseudo-scholarly acrobatics. Indeed, he ranks her study of "Zionism from the Standpoint of Its Jewish Victims" (1988) on a par with the works of his other "good" Jews: Noam Chomsky and Israel Shahak. Perhaps this (well-deserved) tribute explains Miss Shohat's beggarlike gratitude for the miserable bones of condescension thrown to hungry Jews in Said's scandalous book *The Question of Palestine*. Nine years ago, in the pages of this magazine, Hillel Halkin wrote of the lines quoted by Miss Shohat and her colleagues that four brief passages like this in a book of 265 pages that excoriates Zionism and ridicules the Jews as a people without a history, a culture, a religion, a language, are not exactly convincing proof of Said's sympathetic understanding of Jews or Zionism. The rapturous embrace of Said's book by certain Jews shows the truth of Ruth R. Wisse's observation that "simple self-respect . . . has been eluding the Jews collectively since the dawn of modernity."

Messrs. Gover and Robbins and Miss Shohat are also a bit confused in locating the source of "the Orientalist prejudice that all Palestinians are terrorists by definition," since it was Said, not I, who wrote that "there are no divisions in the Palestinian population of four million. We all support the PLO." Nowhere in the letters by Said's supporters do I find any willingness to acknowledge the human status of the over 125 Palestinian Arabs who have been murdered during the *intifada* by the PLO—and murdered, in many cases, precisely because they were interested in the "dialogue" that Miss Shohat and friends claim to desire so passionately. (Bertram Korn, Jr. should be alerted to the possibility that this lethal form of tyranny by the majority is precisely what Said means when he speaks of Palestinian Arab democracy.)

I commend the editors of *Critical Inquiry* for their tremendous diligence not only in discovering the passage I quoted from *The Secret Agent* but even in unearthing the secret that I "align" myself with COMMENTARY. Yet I venture to think that this talent for abstruse research would have been put to better use in exercising editorial control over contributors (including board members) who tell willful untruths such as would be detected by a normally attentive sixth-grader. I regret that I cannot give these self-pitying editors more credit for having mitigated the offense of dullness by the notoriety of scandal in twice opening their pages to Said's exposition of the Goebbels-like paradox that Zionism is racism.

Boundary 2, if we can judge by the pugnacious flailings of its editor, shows less inclination than *Critical Inquiry* for recondite investigation. Nothing daunted by Said's apologia for murder, Mr. Bové has (for once) fallen victim to an idea—the deluding and (to him) flattering idea that "the pro-Israeli, Zionist forces" have conspired with the "hypocritical" Arnoldian humanists "to defend the exclusion of the powerless from the privileges of the powerful," and (somewhat contradictorily) to wrest "political and cultural authority" from Mr. Bové and his friends. Since Mr. Bové belongs to a critical school (the Heideggerian branch, significantly) that has no interest in the relation of theory to empirical evidence, it is probably futile to remark that I never mentioned Arnold in my essay. Had Mr. Bové read *Culture and Anarchy*, he would know that Arnold was indebted to Swift's *Battle of the Books* for the phrase "sweetness and light." (He might even have benefited from Arnold's observation that the spider in Swift's fable, with his modernism, self-love, and pugnacity, represents liberalism.)

Still, Mr. Bové is surely right to set himself and Said in opposition to sweetness and light, beauty and intelligence—not because they are, as he imagines, the special property of the "powerful," but for the very opposite reason. "The men of culture," wrote Arnold, "are the true apostles of equality . . . who have labored to divest knowledge of all that was harsh, uncouth, difficult, abstract, professional, exclusive; to humanize it, to make it efficient outside the clique of the cultivated and learned." Now *there* is an ideal by which to judge *Critical Inquiry*

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and *boundary 2* and a few other journals that validate Proust's reference to "the fatal progress of aestheticism which ends by eating its own tail."

I am grateful for the amplifications and refinements of my argument from several correspondents. Arthur M. Newman provides a superb analysis of the nihilism that leads Said so effortlessly from deconstructive literary criticism into apologetics for terror. Thus, Said has complained that "So much of the current discussion and representation of terrorism simply *assumes* the disinterestedness, detachment, and objectivity of the author. Yet it is a truism of contemporary interpretive theory that no such position can or ever did exist." Unlike Said (or Paul Bové), I do not see the question of whether (for example) machine-gunning the infants in a kibbutz nursery is or is not terrorism as an abstruse intellectual problem presenting a thousand difficulties of optics and relative perspectives. But even if it were, Said conveniently forgets that a thousand difficulties do not add up to one single doubt, that in fact difficulty and doubt are incommensurate. One may encounter a thousand difficulties in working out a mathematical problem without doubting that a particular answer is the true one. Said is hardly the first scribbler of modern times to fall into this jejune error of relativism; but for him it is the thin end of the wedge that opens the way—as David Bar-Illan notes—to encourage and justify terrorism while constantly declaring that you oppose terrorism and never practice it. Mordechai Nisan usefully points out that the search for "collaborators" is an unsavory, self-destructive tradition among Palestinian Arabs, going back to the Night of the Long Knives in the Arab rebellion of the 1930's.

Stephen M. Rittenberg, Herbert M. Wyman, Stephen Karetzky, and Robert Werman deplore the extent to which anti-Israelism has become a smelly orthodoxy of American intellectual life. Michael Scher and Mr. Werman specifically wonder what so scurrilous a political attack as Said's on Griffin was doing in a literary journal. The answer is not far to seek. The editor of *Critical Inquiry*, W.J.T. Mitchell, gave a lecture at Bar-Ilan University in Israel in November 1987 on the topic, "Landscape and the Aesthetics of Colonialism." In it he used one of the propaganda photos from Said's *After the Last Sky* to suggest that an Israeli apartment block overlooking a "picturesque" Arab village had produced a "fractured landscape" that forced on a viewer the question of "who 'owns' this landscape." To Mitchell's political statement, Professor Harold Fisch reacted at the time by referring to the terracing on the Judean hills—a landscape entirely created by Jews during the Second Temple period and largely neglected and allowed to fall into disuse by the Arab "colonizers" after their conquest in the 7th century, until it was restored by the returning children of the ancient Israelites. Now, the PLO's burning of the National Park on the Carmel in September, referred to in Mr. Werman's letter, provides Mitchell with a much more powerful example of a "fractured" landscape than Said's. I look forward to his elucidation, in a forthcoming issue of *Critical Inquiry*, of how it shows the nature and intensity of Palestinian Arab devotion to and ownership of the Holy Land.

Let me end by offering some encouragement to Messrs. Rittenberg and Wyman, who bemoan the fact that in America psychotics can pass as sociologists, apologists for terror as humanists. In France, which often establishes precedent for our literary theorists, the influential structuralist philosopher Louis Althusser, while he was undergoing psychoanalysis by Jacques Lacan in 1980, strangled his wife. He was subsequently judged mentally incompetent to stand trial. These things, as George Eliot used to say, are a parable.

Communism in Decline

To the Editor of Commentary:

. . . In this year of upheaval, we have been treated to articles on "the end of history," "life without Communists," "the disintegration of totalitarianism," "the end of the cold war," "the grand failure of Communism"—yet without any clear sense of what the West, the acknowledged winner in this historic moment, should do. . . .

To this less-than-illuminating debate, often marked by the petulance of a child not wanting the game to end even after winning, Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr. has given us a more serious contribution. In his article, "Gorbachev's Cultural Revolution" [August], he both provides an interesting analysis of Soviet politics (for there are now Soviet politics) and also points toward a serious purpose for U.S. (if not Western European) foreign policy in this new era. Unfortunately he touches on the latter only briefly.

Mr. Fairbanks is one of the few Western Sovietologists who have observed a clear strategy on the part of Gorbachev and also the unintended consequences of that strategy. In the last three years, the debate has been dominated by those who with great pain have been forced to abandon the idea that "totalitarianism cannot change" and those who marvel at their false predictions that the Soviet Union would change of its own accord but, contradicting themselves, now argue that it needs massive help from the West to do so (Stephen Cohen and Jerry Hough most notable among them).

That Gorbachev had a strategy to vitalize Communism is now clear; his consolidation of power at the top is the clearest indication that he did not set *glasnost* and *perestroika* loose on the Soviet population to bring about Communism's downfall. Rather, Gorbachev and every other Communist leader face a crisis of Communist civilization and are being forced to respond to that crisis. If people doubted the Brzezinskis, Fainsods, and Puddingtons before, *glasnost* has forced us to be believers all in the systemic crises that face Communist society and the type of radical change it will take to emerge from that crisis. While other Sovietologists have seen the connection between these two issues, Mr. Fairbanks has succinctly and persuasively pressed the case: *glasnost*, *perestroika*, and "democratization" were policies Gorbachev adopted both to consolidate power *and* to save the Communist system and Soviet military domination. At the same time, these policies are not likely to succeed; quite the opposite, Mr. Fairbanks argues, they are likely to lead to Communism's collapse, a "long agony" that he hopes may bring about genuine democratic change.

It is difficult to understand this paradox, and I fear this lack of understanding may prevent a coherent response in the West. Even if the systems are themselves collapsing, why would Gorbachev (and Jaruzelski in Poland, Pozsgay in Hungary, etc.) adopt policies that would fail and that would un-

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leash political forces aimed at breaking down Communist power? What people often fail to realize—even those who have spent lifetimes in the cause of anti-Communism—is the overweening arrogance of Communist leaders. Having built careers and social systems on the basis of controlling all aspects of the political, social, and economic lives of their subjected peoples, Communist leaders naturally come to believe in their omnipotence to control events. Social and political engineering (and deception) has been their career, and now that they face more complex and difficult circumstances, they may even welcome the challenge before them. Their task is even more difficult than Lenin's and Stalin's was in the beginning, when there was adolescent energy, ambition, and violence to be harnessed. Today, these leaders are like the surgeons of terminal patients: they must preserve the life of an aging and gasping Communist system, trying to pump air into lungs collapsed from their own weight. But like a surgeon, Gorbachev seems to relish the opportunity to display daring and complicated techniques.

Poland and Hungary—the two leaders in reform—are additional cases in point. Have the Polish and Hungarian Communist parties just given up? Since we find this hard to believe, we look for the tricks up their sleeves rather than responding with any measure of seriousness. . . .

Jerzy Urban, Polish government spokesman from 1981 to 1989, gives us some insight into the Communist mind in a memo written in December 1980 at the height of Solidarity's first manifestation (the memo was published in English in the journal *Uncaptive Minds* and in French in *Commentaire*). At that time of challenge to Communist power, Urban put forward a strategy opposite to that of martial law, since he predicted the latter would ultimately fail. Instead of trying to suppress Solidarity and the Church, he argued, the Communists should use their political and propaganda power to *coopt* these social forces. Admitting that Communism had failed to capture society's adherence, indeed recognizing that Communism was reviled by most Poles—though still adamant in the cause himself—Urban advised then-Communist leader Stanislaw Kania to harness this energy of opposition and patriotism by allowing minority political representation in a new "coalition government" akin to the Popular Front of 1945 to 1948. In this way, the coherence of the opposition would be broken, and the only united social force left would be the Communist party. Jaruzelski took seven years to recognize both that martial law had failed to suppress Solidarity and that he would be unable to obtain the needed Western assistance to avoid an economic collapse. He thus adopted this more sophisticated and less violent strategy, one that would be more likely to succeed in obtaining foreign investment and aid. Poszgay, on the other hand, may be even more clever yet. Imagine the arrogance of a man who, witnessing the total failure of the Communist enterprise, believes that it is possible to achieve a significant enough proportion of the vote in a free election to maintain Communist power and have himself elected president!

Is the political opposition in Hungary, Poland, the Soviet Union, etc. and are we in the West being duped by this new Communist device? That is what is now being proffered as serious analysis of the assumption of office by a Solidarity Prime Minister and the negotiations in Hungary for free elections. It is the flip side of Communist arrogance. Just as the Communist elite is confident in its powers of social engineering, many anti-Communists in the West (and even some in the East) are skeptical that societies under Communism may emerge out of their "Sovietized" state to press for democratic change. But it is just this ability of societies long subjugated to Communist rule to assert their rights and to attempt to regain control over their lives that has brought about the stunning changes in Eastern Europe. Yes, Gorbachev, Jaruzelski, *et al.* have strategies inimical to democracy; but so, too, do the emerging political oppositions have strategies to bring about fundamental, and democratic, change.

The present skepticism about the power of "civil society" in Eastern Europe is born of the same analysis that from 1981 up to 1988 stated confidently that Solidarity was no longer a relevant force in Polish society and that the Communists would never accept divestment of their powers; similarly, one hears today dominant voices in the State Department or in foreign-policy circles that Hungarian society is too passive; that Soviet society is too fractured and its workers too "Sovietized"; that Czech and Slovak society is too accepting of historical defeat; or, before this spring, that the Chinese could never mount a serious democracy movement, and now, that the Chinese will not be able to mount a democracy movement again. Each of these analyses has been wrong and their proponents have thus been surprised each time an oppressed society speaks freely and strongly for democracy.

Charles H. Fairbanks, Jr. (and Zbigniew Brzezinski) have put the case clearly: we are witnessing the decline of this century's most dangerous experiment to create a Communist civilization. It will not just fade away; it will take a very long time to decline; at each stage, the Communist leadership will take advantage of economic, political, and perhaps military resources to maintain its power (in Poland and Hungary the Communist-party *nomenklatura* is appropriating to itself for private use the property it expropriated from everyone else for the state); the nations and societies that have survived constant horrors and oppression will take a very long time to emerge. But that we are entering a new period is now evident, and whatever strategies may be devised to try to maintain the previous stability of the cold war will not work, just as the strategies devised to normalize relations with Poland when Solidarity was illegal also failed.

This puts a greater responsibility on those who seek to design a coherent Western strategy in the age of Gorbachev. Mr. Fairbanks points to what everyone fears: the "terminal crises [of Communist regimes] are *dangerous.*" Such fear is the only credible reason so few have sought to take advantage of the historic opportunities at hand. Only the AFL-CIO, the National Endowment for Democracy, and several private institutions like the Institute for Democracy in Eastern Europe have sought to give aid and support to democratic movements in the Communist world. So many (on the Right and Left) believed that totalitarianism was impervious to change that they find it even more difficult to believe that democratic movements might succeed in bringing about real change, contrary to all the intentions of the

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Communist leadership. Even then, the consequences of such change, what one could only have imagined as the vision of a dreamer, are feared—the reemergence of great-power struggles, in particular of a united Germany that looks to the East for its security; desperate military action by a weakened enemy; ongoing ethnic and national conflict. These dangers exist, but so does the opportunity of ridding ourselves of the totalitarian threat; and no danger will be greater than trying to maintain the "stability" of the cold war, for today there is no such stability, and ultimately there can be no stability so long as the nations of Eastern Europe are forcibly suppressed.

The societies and nations of Eastern Europe are demanding more democracy and more human rights; furthermore they are achieving some of their demands. At the end of their struggle they hope for a stable Europe without military domination by any power. Indeed, Mr. Fairbanks is right: after the "grand failure of Communism," "democracy is emerging as the only coherent and vigorous alternative." This is why in Eastern Europe more and more oppositionists who previously sought some "third way" out of their predicament are now recognizing and speaking openly of democracy, even in countries with little or no experience of it.

In this, the United States can play an important role, for its experience as a nation built on a central idea of democracy is the most relevant one for Eastern Europeans. They want practical advice on how to build democracy and how to obtain the knowledge, experience, and customs to make it work. The tasks at hand require imagination, but also money and resolve. One must start from scratch to rebuild a free economy, a free society, an educational system devoid of indoctrination, free institutions that can strengthen democratic development. True, there will be requests made . . . that seem out of reach and imprudent; they may be, but it will be in the West's interests to provide counsel and advice for an alternative program of aid, and to back that up with money. This will be the only way to allow the institutionalization of democratic gains now won, and to extend those gains beyond any point where Communist power may be returned in full force.

To fear the consequences of the present course of events is prudent; to ignore the opportunities at hand, however, and to lack the resolve to respond to this historic opportunity is unconscionable. In any case, there is little alternative than to meet these new dangers and opportunities. We can ask nothing less of ourselves than what the East Europeans are now demanding.

ERIC CHENOWETH
Co-editor, *Uncaptive Minds*
Washington, D.C.

CHARLES H. FAIRBANKS, JR. writes:

Eric Chenoweth has spotted the most baffling riddle posed for us by *perestroika*: how leaders such as Gorbachev, Poszgay, and Jaruzelski can believe that their unleashing of disintegrative forces will be a means to the strengthening of the Communist systems. His explanation—the overweening arrogance of Communist leaders—is (together with the tactical necessities of leadership-succession struggles) the most satisfying answer I have encountered. In fact, the manipulation of fundamentally antagonistic forces—peasants, social democrats, liberals, pacifists—to give victory to an isolated minority is an old weapon from the armory of Leninist tactics in challenging circumstances (i.e., before the seizure of power and in foreign relations). As Communism's hold on its societies crumbles, it is not crumbling itself but trying to relive its youthful successes in adversity: the sign of a certain vitality. Communism is not finished as a force in history. But it is possible to finish it. This historic opportunity has been intelligently and eloquently outlined by Mr. Chenoweth.

I am not sure, however, whether or not Mr. Chenoweth agrees with me about the scale of the *dangers* which will issue from Communism's decline. It seems to me that the greatest test of our intellectual sophistication in responding to our new situation is to recognize the approach simultaneously of great opportunities and of great dangers. After all, the opportunities and dangers have the same source: the end of a situation in which the ability of Communist elites to control their societies enabled them to face us with dangers that were great but predictable, so that they tended to unite the West in resistance. World politics assumed a bipolar form that largely excluded the unexpected. Now Communism, mortally threatened in its own rear, is becoming gradually less ambitious and powerful, but at the same time more desperate and, as we have already seen, more inventive. We can already see how the shift in the character of the threat is unraveling the Western resistance to it. While we can assume that post-Communist regimes in Poland and Hungary will be benign, we cannot assume this in the Soviet Union, where the neo-Stalinists are already seeking allies among the quasi-fascists. But our debate has thus far not been able to recognize the complexity of our situation: it has been polarized between those who argue that there are no opportunities (because the troubles of Communism are seen as mere tactics of its rulers) and those who say that there are no dangers (because Communism is finished and the cold war is over). Both of these oversimplifications encourage the passivity that Mr. Chenoweth rightly protests.

German Reunification

TO THE EDITOR OF COMMENTARY:

With his article, "The Dangers Beyond Containment" [August], Patrick Glynn has rendered a valuable service by pointing to dangers in Europe that have long been ignored by the media. To take an example: the media greeted the INF treaty with great fanfare without sensing that it practically committed every future West German government to oppose the modernization of short-range nuclear missiles.

The feeling of being "singled out" has reintroduced the perception in West Germany of a specifically German geopolitical situation (and responses). This perception has been reinforced by other recent developments such as the rediscovery of "national history," . . . and the failure of Communism in East Germany, with the attendant hope of more civil rights for its people. The stream of refugees from East Germany is only the latest event to have given the idea of reunification a new impetus. The friendly reception accorded Gorbachev earlier should be seen against that background.

It is time for the U.S. and West Germany to ponder the consequences of a more liberalized regime in East Germany, as well as those of German reunification. The U.S. ambassador to West Germany, Vernon Walters, has recently allowed

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that reunification may not be far off. While a truly neutral Germany would present opportunities for a forward-looking U.S. policy, there may be reunification under less than desirable conditions.

With its past record in favor of reunification, it would be very unwise for the U.S. to oppose it now, but the geopolitical consequences of an ill-conceived policy have to be thought through. Right now, the strategic value of East Germany to the Soviet Union consists in limiting the freedom of choice for the countries between them. A reunited Germany, even one with a democratically elected government, could at some point serve Soviet interests. It would feel indebted to the USSR for allowing reunification and, at the same time, rekindle Western fears of an economically strong, more eastward than westward-looking center of Europe.

The USSR might be a partner for those who wish to reconstitute a national German state within its 1937 borders. The German extreme Right, for example, has made such a state part of its program. And even if it should not come to this, the two countries could help each other to counteract tendencies on the part of the countries between them to become too independent or too insistent on territorial integrity. Historical precedents for such an understanding exist. The likelihood that a Central Europe that is non-revisionist would emerge is, in my estimate, not very high.

ALEXANDER VON GRAEVENITZ
Zurich, Switzerland

PATRICK GLYNN writes:

I believe Alexander von Graevenitz's speculations accurately reflect thinking that is going on in West Germany and Europe at present—thinking of which Americans should be more aware. But while I agree with him on the need to ponder future possibilities, I cannot help feeling that in all this talk of German "reunification," we are getting a little ahead of ourselves. The extrapolations into the future that we are making today, with a good deal of deliberate encouragement from Moscow, are leading us, and the West Germans, to behave in ways inimical to our (and West German) interest.

Let me begin with this premise: a unified Germany, under a West German-style government and firmly integrated in NATO, would pose no threat to the United States, or for that matter to the rest of Europe. Such a Germany might actually have been possible at the end of World War II, had not General Eisenhower, at President Roosevelt's probable instructions, foolishly ceded Berlin to Stalin by stopping Allied forces on the Elbe in the spring of 1945. The division of Germany that resulted largely from this incredibly ill-advised and almost inexplicable decision has never been necessary for peace. The key to pacifying Germany was never to dismember it, as Clemenceau believed after World War I, but simply to alter its political regime—i.e., to transform it into a *stable* liberal democracy, and in this way to welcome it into the family of modern, liberal-democratic European nations. This was done after World War II on the Allied side. Can anyone deny that the West German people have prospered better under their present Western-oriented parliamentary government than they did under Hitlerite, Weimar, or Wilhelmine rule—or that they have not enjoyed an immeasurably better life than their East German counterparts?

However, today it would be exceedingly difficult to achieve what might have been achieved comparatively easily after World War II had the Anglo-American, and not the Soviet, armies taken Berlin: namely, a unified, truly democratic Germany. Even assuming that after "party renewal" in East Germany some liberalization takes place there, we will still be dealing with a Communist regime—one of the hardest and most ruthless in the world. "Reunification," if it were undertaken, would necessarily involve a coalition between the present West German government and the East German government. It would also probably be offered only at the price of West Germany's leaving NATO. I believe we have had enough experience since 1945 with coalition arrangements involving Communist and non-Communist elements, the latter unbacked by American military power, to predict how the chips would fall: it would only be a matter of time before all of Germany was more like East Germany. The reunification of Germany, under these circumstances, would merely be the first act in a play whose climax was the Communization of Germany (albeit for the time being under the allegedly pleasant "reform" Communism that we see today).

For all the emotion that has seized West German public life in recent months, I believe the West German government and people are still sensible enough to see this, and that is why I believe, if and when the moment of truth were to arrive, that reunification itself would be unlikely to occur. Rather, the possibility of reunification will be dangled before West Germany, for as long as the Soviets can sustain the illusion, in an effort to break West Germany away from its NATO partners. The Soviet goal is not so much the reunification of Germany as the Finlandization of West Germany, with the ultimate objective the weakening of American influence and gaining ever greater access to West German technology and capital for modernizing the Soviet military-industrial base. One of the bitter ironies of the present situation is that the massive exodus of East German citizens, which should be, and is, viewed as a massive defeat for the government in East Berlin, is also helping to transfix West German attention on the East and causing West Germany to become even more generous with economic aid to the Eastern bloc. Lenin, whose specialty lay in turning just such terrible defeats into strategic victories, would be proud of his successors in Moscow and Budapest, if not East Berlin.

The INF treaty—and the incompetent handling of U.S.-West German relations by the Reagan administration in its final two years—bears a heavy responsibility for all these developments; indeed, critics of the treaty predicted most of these consequences at the time. But not only is there a refusal to admit this reality in the U.S. government and elsewhere; we are preparing to enter into new arms agreements that will only intensify the divisions in the alliance and further undercut the basis of the security relationship between Washington and Bonn.

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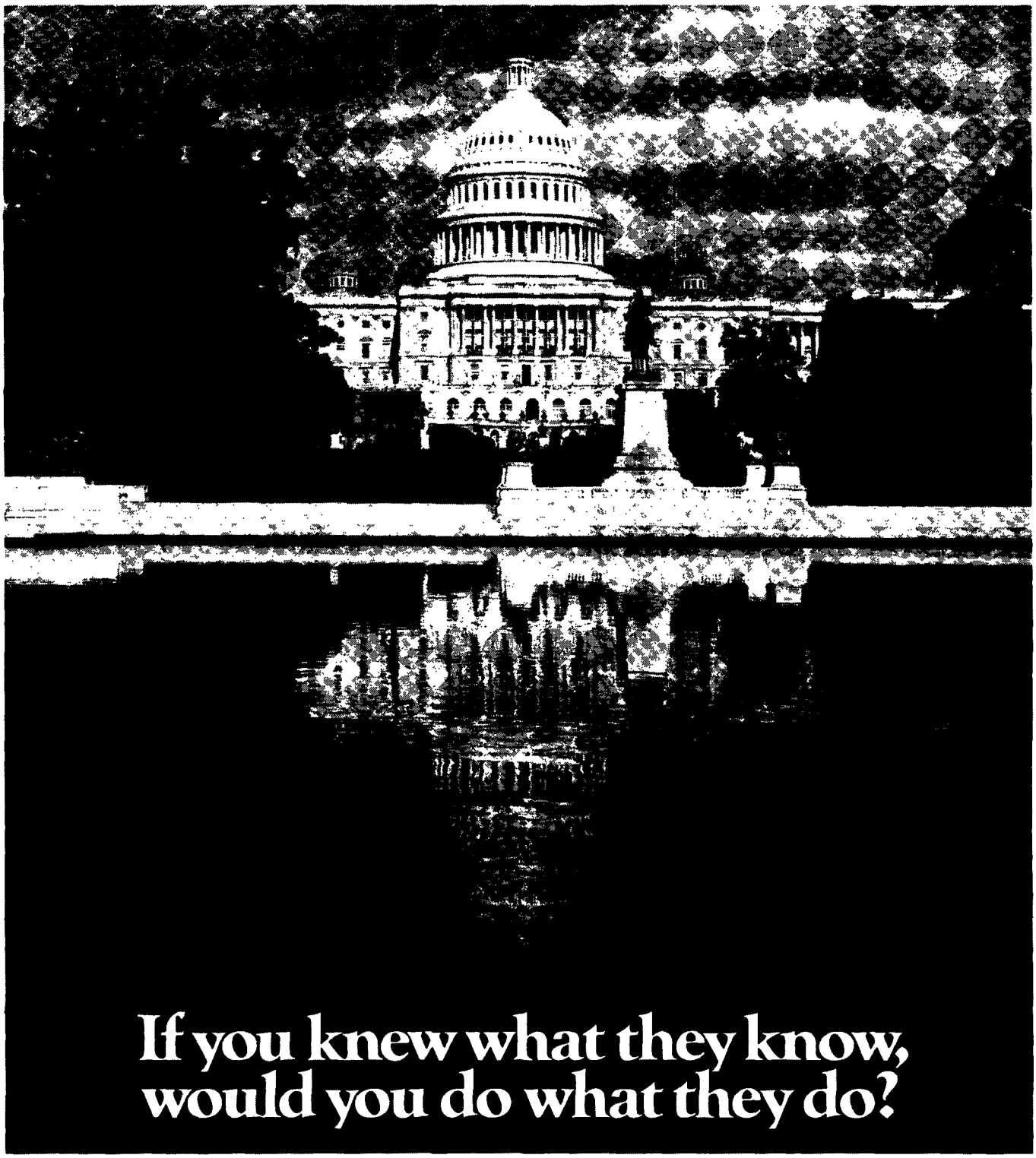

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"Affirmative Action": A Worldwide Disaster

Thomas Sowell

ARGUMENTS for and against "affirmative action" have raged for about twenty years in the United States. Similar arguments have provoked controversy—and even bloodshed—for a longer or a shorter period, in the most disparate societies, scattered around the world. India, Nigeria, Australia, Guyana, Malaysia, Sri Lanka, Pakistan, and Indonesia are just some of the countries where some groups receive official, government-sanctioned preferences over others. While the American phrase "affirmative action" is used in Australia and Canada, other countries have used a variety of other phrases, such as "positive discrimination" (India), "sons of the soil" preferences (Indonesia, Malaysia), "standardization" (Sri Lanka), or "reflecting the federal character" of the country (Nigeria). The same general principle of government apportionment of coveted positions, to supersede the competition of the marketplace or of academia, was of course also embodied in the *numerus clausus* laws used to restrict the opportunities of Jews in prewar Central and Eastern Europe.

The countries with preferential policies have varied enormously in cultural, political, economic, and other ways. The groups receiving preferences have likewise varied greatly, from locally or nationally dominant groups in some countries to the poorest and most abject groups, such as the untouchables of India. Such vast disparities in settings and people make it all the more striking that there are common patterns among these countries—patterns with serious implications for "affirmative-action" policies in the United States. Among these pattterns are the following:

1. Preferential programs, even when explicitly and repeatedly defined as "temporary," have tended not only to persist but also to expand in scope, either embracing more groups or spreading to wider realms for the same groups, or both. Even preferential programs established with legally mandated cut-off dates, as in India and Pakistan, have continued far past those dates by subsequent extensions.

2. Within the groups designated by government as recipients of preferential treatment, the benefits have usually gone disproportionately to those members already more fortunate.

3. Group polarization has tended to increase in the wake of preferential programs, with non-preferred groups reacting adversely, in ways ranging from political backlash to mob violence and civil war.

4. Fraudulent claims of belonging to the designated beneficiary groups have been widespread and have taken many forms in various countries.

In the United States, as in other countries around the world, the empirical consequences of preferential policies have received much less attention than the rationales and goals of such policies. Too often these rationales and goals have been sufficient unto themselves, both in the political arena and in courts of law. Without even an attempt at empirical assessment of costs versus benefits, with no attempt to pinpoint either losers or gainers, discussions of preferential policies are often exercises in assertion, counter-assertion, and accusation. Illusions flourish in such an atmosphere. So do the disappointments and bitterness to which illusions lead.

Foremost among these illusions is the belief that group "disparities" in "representation" are suspect anomalies that can be corrected by having the government temporarily apportion places on the basis of group membership. Every aspect of this belief fails the test of evidence, in country after country. The prime moral illusion is that preferential policies compensate for wrongs suffered. This belief has been supported only by a thin veneer of emotional rhetoric, seldom examined but often reiterated.

I. The Assumptions of "Affirmative Action"

"Temporary" Policies

WHEN U.S. Supreme Court Justice William J. Brennan described the "affirmative-action" plan in the *Weber* case as "a

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temporary measure," he was echoing a view widely held, not only in the United States but also around the world. Britain's Lord Scarman likewise said:

> We can and for the present must accept the loading of the law in favor of one group at the expense of others, defending it as a temporary expedient in the balancing process which has to be undertaken when and where there is social and economic inequality.

The rhetoric of transience and the reality of persistence and proliferation are both international features of preferential policies. "Affirmative-action" plans initially justified in the United States by the unique historic sufferings of blacks have been successively extended, over the years, to groups that now add up to several times as many people as the black population—and more than half of the total American population. These include not only American Indians, Hispanics, and Asians, but also women. A very similar pattern emerged in India, where official preferences were established more than forty years ago for untouchables, for some tribal groups, and for unspecified "other backward classes." Since then, so many groups have managed to get themselves included under "other backward classes" that they now outnumber the untouchables and the tribal peoples put together.

Even where no new groups are added to those legally entitled to official preferences, new occupations, institutions, and sectors of the society can fall under the coverage of preferential policies. Malays were granted preferential employment in government back in colonial Malaya under the British. After Malaya became independent Malaysia, and especially after the "New Economic Policy" announced in 1969, preferences spread to university admissions, government loans, occupational licenses, and employment in private businesses, both local and foreign-owned. The island nation of Sri Lanka has followed a pattern much like that of Malaysia. Preferences for the Sinhalese have not spread to other groups but have simply become more pronounced and more widespread over time.

Perhaps the classic example of preferences that spread far beyond their initial group and their original rationale have been the preferences in Pakistan. The desperately poor Bengalis of East Pakistan were "underrepresented" in the civil service, the military, business, and the professions. Even the administration of East Pakistan was filled with West Pakistanis. Preferential policies to correct this were advocated in 1949 as "temporary" expedients to be phased out in five to ten years. In reality, however, these policies have lasted decades beyond this time and in 1984 were extended to 1994 by the late President Zia. Not only did preferential quotas spread well beyond people from the East Pakistan region; they persisted long after East Pakistan broke away in 1971 to form the independent nation of Bangladesh. In other words, those who provided the initial rationale for preferential policies have now disappeared by secession but the policies themselves have acquired a political life of their own.

Despite such patterns in these and other countries, the word "temporary" continues to be used in discussions of preferential policies—judicial and scholarly, as well as popular and political. No argument seems to be considered necessary to show that this transience can be enforced, so that the word "temporary" will be something more than political decoration. Indeed, few seem to feel a need to specify whether the dimensions of "temporary" are to be measured in actual units of time or by the attainment of some preconceived social results. If the latter, then the distinction between "temporary" and "eternal" can be wholly illusory in practice. In short, the nebulousness of the concept of "temporary" preference has matched its futility.

Statistical Disparities

EQUALLY nebulous are the assumptions about the statistical "disparities" and "imbalances" that preferential policies are supposed to correct.

The idea that large statistical disparities between groups are unusual—and therefore suspicious—is commonplace, but only among those who have not bothered to study the history of racial, ethnic, and other groups in countries around the world. Among leading scholars who have in fact devoted years of research to such matters, a radically different picture emerges. Donald L. Horowitz of Duke University, at the end of a massive and masterful international study of ethnic groups—a study highly praised in scholarly journals—examined the idea of a society where groups are "proportionately represented" at different levels and in different sectors. He concluded that "few, if any, societies have ever approximated this description."

A worldwide study of military forces and police forces by Cynthia Enloe of Clark University likewise concluded that "militaries fall far short of mirroring, even roughly, the multi-ethnic societies" from which they come. Moreover, just "as one is unlikely to find a police force or a military that mirrors its plural society, so one is unlikely to find a representative bureaucracy." One reason is that "it is common for different groups to rely on different mobility ladders." Some choose the military, some the bureaucracy, and some various parts of the private sector. Even within the military, different branches tend to have very different racial or ethnic compositions—the Afrikaners, for example, being slightly underrepresented in the South African navy and greatly overrepresented in the South African army, though their utter dominance in the government ensures that they cannot be discriminated against in either branch. Pow-

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erless minorities have likewise been greatly overrepresented or even dominant in particular branches of the military or the police—the Chinese in Malaysia's air force and among detectives in the police force, for example.

In the private sector as well, it is commonplace for minorities to be overrepresented, or even dominant, in competitive industries where they have no power to prevent others from establishing rival businesses. Jewish prominence in the clothing industry, not only in the United States, but in Argentina and Chile as well, did not reflect any ability to prevent other Americans, Argentines, or Chileans from manufacturing garments, but simply the advantages of the Jews' having brought needle-trade skills and experience with them from Eastern Europe. The fact that Jews owned more than half the clothing stores in mid-19th-century Melbourne likewise reflected that same advantage, rather than any ability to forbid other Australians from selling clothes. In a similar way, German minorities have been dominant as pioneers in piano manufacturing in colonial America, czarist Russia, Australia, France, and England. Italian fishermen, Japanese farmers, and Irish politicians have been among many other minority groups with special success in special fields in various countries, without any ability to keep out others.

Another distinguished scholar who has studied multi-ethnic societies around the world, Myron Weiner of MIT, refers to "the universality of ethnic inequality." He points out that those inequalities are multidimensional:

> All multi-ethnic societies exhibit a tendency for ethnic groups to engage in different occupations, have different levels (and, often, types) of education, receive different incomes, and occupy a different place in the social hierarchy.

Yet the pattern Professor Weiner has seen, after years of research, as a "universality" is routinely assumed to be an *anomaly*, not only by preferential-policy advocates, but also by the intelligentsia, the media, legislators, and judges—all of whom tend to assume, as a *norm*, what Professor Horowitz has found to exist (or even to be approximated) in "few, if any, societies." That what exists widely across the planet is regarded as an anomaly, while what exists virtually nowhere is regarded as a norm, is a tribute to the effectiveness of sheer reiteration in establishing a vision—and of the difficulties of dispelling a prevailing vision by facts.

Some might try to salvage the statistical argument for discrimination by describing discrimination as also being universal. But, to repeat, groups who are in no position to discriminate against anybody have often been overrepresented in coveted positions—the Chinese in Malaysian universities, the Tamils in Sri Lankan universities, the southerners in Nigerian universities, all during the 1960's, and Asians in American universities today being just some of the minorities of whom this has been true. All sorts of other powerless minorities have dominated particular industries or sectors of the economy, the intellectual community, or government employment. Among businessmen, India's Gujaratis in East Africa, the Lebanese in West Africa, the Chinese in Southeast Asia, the Jews in Eastern Europe, and Koreans and Vietnamese in black ghettos across the United States are just some examples. Among high government officials, the Germans were greatly overrepresented in czarist Russia, as were Christians in the Ottoman empire. Among intellectuals, the Scots were as dominant in 18th- and 19th-century Britain as the Jews have been in other parts of Europe. In short, large statistical disparities have been commonplace, both in the presence of discrimination and in its absence. Indeed, large disparities have been commonplace in the utilization of preferential programs designed to reduce disparities.

The intellectual and political *coup* of those who promote the randomness assumption is to put the burden of proof entirely on others. It is not merely the individual employer, for example, who must disprove this assumption in his own particular case in order to escape a charge of discrimination. All who oppose the randomness assumption find themselves confronted with the task of disproving an elusive plausibility, for which no evidence is offered. As for counter-evidence, no enumeration of the myriad ways in which groups are grossly disparate—in age of marriage, alcohol consumption, immigration patterns, performance in sports, performance on tests—can ever be conclusive, even when extended past the point where the patience of the audience is exhausted.

Those viscerally convinced of the pervasiveness of discrimination and its potency as an explanation of social disparities—and convinced also of the effectiveness of preferential policies as a remedy—are little troubled by the logical shakiness of the statistical evidence. That is all the more reason for others to be doubly troubled—not simply because an incorrect policy may be followed but also, and more importantly, because actions ostensibly based on the rule of law are in substance based on visceral convictions, the essence of lynch law.

Statistical "Control" and "Explanation"

Those who regard income differences or occupational differences among groups as evidence of discrimination recognize that groups also differ in education, job experience, and other factors that affect such results as incomes and occupations. However, by comparing individuals with the same education, the same job experience, etc., who belong to different racial or ethnic groups, they treat the remaining differentials in pay or occupational status as evidence of discrimination and as a rough measure of its magnitude. In principle, this process of statisti-

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cally controlling variables that affect outcomes is logical and reasonable. It is only in practice that serious problems arise because we simply do not know enough to do what we are trying to do or claiming to do.

A 1982 study by the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights, for example, recognized that differences in age and education affect incomes but considered that its study of intergroup economic differences was "controlling for such factors" when it compared individuals of the same age and with the same number of years of schooling. Unfortunately, education is one of many *multidimensional* variables. Education varies not only in number of years, but also qualitatively, according to the caliber of the institution in which the education was received, the performance of the student receiving the education, and the kind of field in which the student specializes. Seldom are statistical data sufficiently detailed to permit holding all these dimensions of education constant. Moreover, qualitative variables such as the caliber of the institution are difficult to quantify and impossible to quantify with precision.

One way of dealing with this complication is to ignore the multidimensional nature of education, by either explicitly or implicitly assuming that these individual variations more or less cancel out when comparing thousands of people. However, individuals from different racial or ethnic groups differ not only randomly but also systematically. For example, groups with significantly lower quantities of education tend to have lower qualities of education as well, whether quality is measured by individual performance, institutional ranking, or the prestige and remuneration of the fields of specialization. This pattern is found, whether comparing Chinese versus Malays in Malaysia, Tamils versus Sinhalese in Sri Lanka, European and American Jews versus North African and Middle Eastern Jews in Israel, caste Hindus versus untouchables in India, or whites versus blacks or Hispanics in the United States. Thus, what is called the "same" education in intergroup statistical comparisons is often not even approximately the same education in reality.

The difference that these multiple dimensions can make may be illustrated by one of the few studies that attempted to control the qualitative dimensions of education—a study comparing the salaries of faculty members from different racial backgrounds. Among its variables were (1) possession or non-possession of a Ph.D.; (2) the professional ranking of the department from which the Ph.D. was obtained; (3) the field of specialization; and (4) the number of articles published by the faculty member. In gross terms—that is, controlling for none of these variables—white faculty had a higher average salary than black faculty. But when blacks and whites in the same field were compared, blacks had higher salaries than whites in the social sciences and the natural sciences, while whites had higher salaries in the humanities. When comparing blacks and whites who both had Ph.D.'s from highly rated departments, blacks earned more than whites in all three areas. Among faculty members with Ph.D.'s from lower-ranked departments, however, whites still had higher salaries than blacks. Blacks with Ph.D.'s earned higher salaries in the social sciences and whites with Ph.D.'s earned more in the natural sciences. Among faculty members with Ph.D.'s and five or more articles published, blacks had higher salaries than whites in all three fields, when both had their doctorates from the same quality level of institution.

In short, the very same raw data can tell not only a different story, but even an opposite story, according to how much they are disaggregated or how many variables are held constant. Ultimately the researcher is limited by the available data and the dimensions they cover. These particular data happened to cover qualitative dimensions that are often lacking. This good fortune resulted from the long-standing practice of academic professions to rank graduate departments in their own respective fields. What is more generally relevant to the use of statistics in preferential-policy analysis is that individuals with apparently the "same" education along one dimension may have very different education along other dimensions. Put another way, groups are not distributed randomly or the same among the various dimensions. In this particular example, black faculty had a Ph.D. less than half as frequently as white faculty, the Ph.D.'s received by black faculty were from high-quality institutions less than half as often, and were concentrated in fields with lower average earnings. Finally, black faculty published far less than white faculty.

These data also happened to include Asian faculty members. Their distribution in all these respects differed substantially from the distributions of either blacks or whites. Such multidimensional differences among groups are commonplace around the world, however often random or proportionate distribution is *assumed* in discussions of preferential policy. In India, for example, an attempt to compare untouchable medical-school students and caste Hindu medical-school students of the same social characteristics proved futile when individuals from the two groups who were similar in specified characteristics turned out, during lengthy interviews, to be very dissimilar in characteristics not specified at the outset but clearly relevant to their medical education.

Beginning with untouchable and caste Hindu "students matched individually" by "some important background characteristics" such as father's occupation, income, or language, Indian scholar P.R. Velaskar later discovered that "the match group is not perfectly matched as originally planned"—a considerable understatement, for the illiteracy rate among the fathers and grandfathers

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of the untouchable medical-school students was several times as high as among the other medical-school students' fathers and grandfathers. Understandably, the untouchable students had had parental guidance in their education less often than the other students had, the homes from which they came contained far fewer books, and their pre-college schools were not as good. They were not meaningfully the same, even though the same on the particular socioeconomic characteristics initially specified. Untouchable students in India's medical, engineering, and other institutions of higher learning have had disastrously higher failure rates and drop-out rates.

Multidimensional differences are not statistically "controlled" by holding one dimension constant, even when that is the only dimension on which data are available. Moreover, not all differences are quantifiable, or all non-quantifiable differences negligible in their effect on outcomes. Where statistics are able to capture only some of the relevant dimensions—to "control" only some of the variables—the assumption that remaining disparities represent discrimination is implicitly an assumption that groups are distributed similarly in the unexamined dimensions, however disparately they are distributed in the variables for which we have data.

Just as statistical "controls" for variables that differ among groups often fail to control, so statistical "explanations" often fail to explain in any but the most narrow definitional sense used by statisticians. When two groups differ in some way—in income, for example—and 20 percent of that difference is eliminated by holding constant some factor *x* (years of education, for instance), then *in a purely definitional sense* statisticians say that factor *x* "explains" 20 percent of the difference between the groups. Unfortunately, as arguments develop, their initial special definitions and assumptions tend to fade into the background, with the statistical results becoming correspondingly inflated as to their scope and validity.

The potential for misleading explanations can be illustrated with a simple example. Shoe size undoubtedly correlates with test scores on advanced mathematics examinations, in the sense that people with size-3 shoes probably cannot, on average, answer as many questions correctly as people with size-12 shoes—the former being much more likely to be younger children and the latter more likely to be older children or adults. Thus shoe size "explains" part of the math-score difference—in the special sense in which statisticians use the word. But nobody can expect to do better on a math test by wearing larger shoes on the day it is taken. In the real sense of the word, shoe size *explains* nothing.

When a statistician testifies in court that his data can "explain" only 40 percent of income disparities between groups by "controlling" for age, education, urbanization, and whatever other variable may be cited, the judge and jury may not realize how little the words "explain" and "control" mean in this context. Judge and jury may conclude that the other 60 percent must represent discrimination. But virtually no statistical study can control for all the relevant variables simultaneously, because the in-depth data, especially along qualitative dimensions, are often simply not available. By controlling for the available variables and implicitly assuming that the unaccounted-for variables do not differ significantly between groups, one can generate considerable residual "unexplained" statistical disparity. It is arbitrary to call that residual "discrimination."

Looked at another way, groups with visible, quantifiable disadvantages often have other, not-so-visible, not-so-quantifiable disadvantages as well. If statistics manage to capture the effect of the first kinds of disadvantages, the effects of the second kind become part of an unexplained residual. It is equating that residual with discrimination that is the fatal leap in logic. There may in fact be real discrimination—but the crude statistics currently available neither demonstrate its presence nor measure its magnitude.

Statistical Trends

Where the benefits of "affirmative action" are not simply regarded as axiomatic, they are too often based on a partial reading of statistical trends. "Before" and "after" comparisons abound, to show that minority representation in this or that institution or sector—or in desirable jobs throughout the economy—has increased in the wake of preferential policies. This might be valid in a static world, to which "change" was added—which seems to be the kind of world envisioned by those using that approach. However, such a vision bears little resemblance to the real world, in which affirmative action has been just one of innumerable social changes, including many going back much farther than preferential policies.

The proportions of blacks in professional and other high-level occupations increased substantially in the decade following passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964—a fact often cited as evidence of its effectiveness in the economy. What is almost never cited is the fact that the proportions of blacks in such occupations rose even more substantially in the decade *preceding* passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. Nor were blacks unique. The incomes of Chinese Americans, Japanese Americans, and Mexican Americans all rose, both absolutely and relative to the incomes of whites, in the decade preceding passage of the Civil Rights Act of 1964. This was not a static world, to which "change" was added, but a world of trends already in motion. Moreover, the kinds of

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social trends that preceded preferential policies were by no means unique to the United States.

In a number of countries around the world, it has been precisely the rise of a newly-educated and upwardly-mobile class among previously lagging groups that provided the political impetus to demands for preferential policies. In Bombay, capital of India's state of Maharashtra, the "marked advancement of the Maharashtrians occurred prior to the stringent policy measures adopted by the state government" to promote preferential hiring, according to a scholarly study. In part this reflected a prior "enormous growth in school enrollments" in Maharashtra and a "rapid expansion in college enrollment"—also prior to preferences. A similar growth of an indigenous, newly-educated class in Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Lithuania during the years between the two world wars led to demands for preferential policies in the form of group quotas to relieve them from having to compete with Jews. Likewise, in Nigeria, it was the recent growth of an educated class in the north that led to demands for preferential policies to relieve them from having to compete with more educated southern Nigerians. This same pattern of a rising educated class prior to the preferential policies that they promote can also be found in Indonesia, Sri Lanka, Malaysia, the Quebec province of Canada, and much of sub-Saharan Africa.

A serious assessment of preferential policies cannot ignore preexisting trends. Neither can it generalize from trends in particular sectors to national trends. Even in countries where nationwide data on the economic position of officially preferred groups show little or no improvement, nevertheless improvements in particular sectors may be dramatic. For example, increased employment of officially preferred groups at higher levels may be much more striking in government agencies and in government-related parts of the private sector than in the economy as a whole. This pattern has been visible at various periods in India, Poland, Malaysia, Hungary, Sri Lanka, and the United States. But this is hardly decisive evidence of the effectiveness of such policies when nationwide data tell a very different story.

In the United States, stories and statistics abound as to how the number of blacks employed in particular institutions increased dramatically during the 1970's—often in government agencies or in firms with government contracts that made them subject to federal "guidelines." However, the employment of blacks by private firms without government contracts actually declined between 1970 and 1980. What were, from the viewpoint of the economy, *transfers* of people were seen from the viewpoint of particular institutions as dramatic *increases*. It is one of the elementary fallacies to generalize from a part to the whole, whether it is called "the fallacy of composition" or the story of the blind men feeling different parts of an elephant.

Assumptions as Law

Flaws in logic or evidence are unfortunate in intellectual speculation but they are far more serious in courts of law, where major penalties may be inflicted on those whose employees or students, for example, do not have a racial or ethnic composition that meets the preconceptions of other people. Some U.S. Supreme Court Justices have repeatedly treated statistical disparities as tantamount to discrimination and assumed the task of restoring groups to where they would have been otherwise. Even where group disparities in "representation" reflect demonstrable performance disparities, these performance disparities themselves have been taken as proof of societal discrimination. Thus, in the *Weber* case, Justice Harry Blackmun declared that there could be "little doubt that any lack of skill" on the part of minority workers competing with Brian Weber "has its roots in purposeful discrimination of the past." In the *Bakke* case, four Justices declared that the failure of minority medical-school applicants to perform as well as Allan Bakke "was due principally to the effects of past discrimination." The Court's task, therefore, was one of "putting minority applicants in the position they would have been in if not for the evil of racial discrimination."

All this presupposes a range of knowledge that no one has ever possessed. Ironically, this sweeping assumption of knowledge has been combined with an apparent ignorance of vast disparities in performance, disparities favoring groups with no power to discriminate against anybody. From such judicial speculation it is only a short step to the idea of restoring groups to where they would have been—and *what* they would have been—but for the offending discrimination.

What would the average Englishman be like today "but for" the Norman conquest? What would the average Japanese be like "but for" the enforced isolation of Japan for two-and-a-half centuries under the Tokugawa shoguns? What would the Middle East be like "but for" the emergence of Islam? In any other context besides preferential-policy issues, the presumption of knowing the answers to such questions would be regarded as ridiculous, even as intellectual speculation, much less as a basis for serious legal action.

To know how one group's employment, education, or other pattern differs statistically from another's is usually easy. What is difficult to know are the many variables determining the interest, skill, and performance of those individuals from various groups who are being considered for particular jobs, roles, or institutions. What is virtually impossible to know are the patterns that would exist in a non-discriminatory world—the deviations from which would indicate the existence and magnitude of discrimination.

Age distribution and geographic distribution

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are only two very simple factors which can play havoc with the assumption that groups would be evenly or randomly distributed in occupations and institutions, in the absence of discrimination. When one group's median age is a decade younger than another's—not at all uncommon—that alone may be enough to cause the younger group to be statistically "overrepresented" in sports, crime, and entry-level jobs, as well as in those kinds of diseases and accidents that are more prevalent among the young, while the older group is overrepresented in homes for the elderly, in the kinds of jobs requiring long years of experience, and in the kinds of diseases and accidents especially prevalent among older people.

Another very simple factor operating against an even "representation" of groups is that many ethnic groups are distributed geographically in patterns differing from one another. It would be unlikely that American ethnic groups concentrated in cold states like Minnesota and Wisconsin would be as well represented among citrus growers and tennis players as they are on hockey teams and among skiers. It is also unlikely that groups concentrated in land-locked states would be equally represented in maritime activities, or that groups from regions lacking mineral deposits would be as well-represented among miners or in other occupations associated with extractive industries as groups located in Pennsylvania or West Virginia.

Differences in geographic concentrations among racial and ethnic groups are by no means confined to the U.S. In Brazil, people of German and Japanese ancestry are concentrated in the south. In Switzerland, whole regions are predominantly French, German, or Italian. In countries around the world, an overwhelming majority of the Chinese or the Jewish population is heavily concentrated in a few major cities—often in just one city in a given country. Group differences in geographical distribution can reach right down to the neighborhood level or even to particular streets. In Buenos Aires, people of Italian ancestry have concentrated in particular neighborhoods or on particular streets, according to the places of their own or their ancestral origins in Italy. In Bombay, people from different parts of India are likewise concentrated in particular neighborhoods or on particular streets.

Lest the point be misunderstood, while these two simple and obvious factors—age and location—are capable of disrupting the even "representation" that many assume to exist in the absence of discrimination, there are also innumerable other factors, of varying degrees of complexity and influence, that can do the same. Moreover, differences in age and location may play a significant role in explaining *some* socioeconomic differences between *some* groups but not other socioeconomic differences between those groups, or among other groups. The purpose here is not to pinpoint the reasons for intergroup differences—or even to assume that they can all be pinpointed—but rather to show how arbitrary and unfounded is the assumption that groups would be evenly "represented," in the absence of discrimination. Precisely because the known differences among groups are large and multidimensional, the presumption of weighing these differences so comprehensively and accurately as to know where some group would be "but for" discrimination approaches hubris.

Even the more modest goal of knowing the *general direction* of the deviation of a group's position from where it would have been without discrimination is by no means necessarily achievable. What are the "effects" of centuries of injustice, punctuated by recurring outbursts of lethal mass violence, against the overseas Chinese in Southeast Asia or against the Jews in Europe? Both groups are generally more prosperous than their persecutors. Would they have been still more prosperous in the absence of such adversity? Perhaps—but many peoples with a long history of peace, and with prosperity supplied by nature itself, have quietly stagnated. This is not to say that the Jews and the Chinese would have done so. It is only to say that *we do not know and cannot know.* No amount of good intentions will make us omniscient. No fervent invocation of "social justice" will supply the missing knowledge.

Incentives and Results

"AFFIRMATIVE-ACTION" policies assume not only a level of knowledge that no one has ever possessed but also a degree of control that no one has ever exercised. Proponents of preferential policies have tended to reason in terms of the rationales and goals of such policies—not in terms of the *incentives* these policies create. Yet these incentives acquire a life of their own, independent of—and often counter to—the avowed goals of preferential policies. Nor are these simply isolated "mistakes" that can be "corrected." They are the fruition of fundamental misconceptions of the degree of control that can be maintained over a whole galaxy of complex social interactions.

At the individual level, the potential beneficiary and the potential loser are not mere blocks of wood passively placed where the policy dictates. Nor are they automatons who continue acting as before, except for modifications specified for them by others. Rather, they respond *in their own ways* to preferential policies. One of these ways was exemplified by a question raised by a group activist seeking preferential hiring in India's city of Hyderabad: "Are we not entitled to jobs just because we are not as qualified?" A Nigerian wrote of "the tyranny of skills." The sense of entitlement—independent of skills or performance—has long been an accompaniment of preferential pol-

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icies, for the most disparate groups in the most disparate societies.

The late South African economist W.H. Hutt pointed out long ago that the most "virulent" white supporters of early racial-preferential policies in the mines were "those who had not troubled to qualify themselves for promotion," and who therefore relied on being white instead. Today, in the Virgin Islands, even schoolchildren excuse their own substandard academic and behavioral performance by pointing out that government jobs will be waiting for them as U.S. citizens—jobs for which their better-behaved and better-performing West Indian classmates are ineligible. In Malaysia, likewise, "Malay students, who sense that their future is assured, feel less pressure to perform," according to a study there. A study of black colleges in the United States similarly noted that even students planning postgraduate study often showed no sense of urgency about needing to be prepared "because they believed that certain rules would simply be set aside for them." In India, even a fervent advocate of the untouchables, and of preferential policies for them, has urged untouchable students in medical and engineering schools to abandon their "indifference."

The disincentives created by group preferences apply to both preferred and non-preferred groups. As W.H. Hutt wrote of the South African "color bar," these racial preferences "have vitiated the efficiency of the non-whites by destroying incentives" and have also "weakened incentives to efficiency on the part of the whites who have been featherbedded." A very similar principle is found in the very different setting of Jamaica, after it became independent and black-run. There it was the whites who faced the disincentives of the non-preferred. Many withdrew from the competition for public office because they "felt that the day of the black man had come and questioned why they had to make the effort if the coveted job or the national honor would go to the blacks, despite their qualifications." The upshot is that preferential policies represent not simply a transfer of benefits from one group to another, but can also represent a net loss, as both groups perform less well as a result.

Those who initiate preferential policies cannot sufficiently control the reactions of either preferred or non-preferred groups to ensure that such policies will have the desired effect, or even move in the desired direction. Counterproductive reactions that reduce national prosperity or social tranquility adversely affect even members of the preferred group, who are also members of the general society. Whether their gains in one role exceed their losses in the other role is an empirical question whose answer depends on the specifics of each situation. One of the clearly undesired and uncontrolled consequences of preferential policies has been a backlash by non-preferred groups. This backlash has ranged from campus racial incidents in the United States to a bloody civil war in Sri Lanka.

Honors

NOWHERE is control more illusory than in the awarding of honors, whose very meaning and effect depend upon other people's opinions. Preferential honors for members of particular groups can easily render suspect not only those particular honors but also honors fully merited and awarded after free and open competition. If one-fifth of the honors received by preferred groups are awarded under double standards, the other four-fifths are almost certain to fall under a cloud of suspicion as well, if only because some of those who lost out in the competition would prefer to believe that they were not bested fairly. It is by no means clear that more real honors—which are ultimately other people's opinions—will come to a group preferentially given awards. Preferential honors can in practice mean a moratorium on recognition of the group's achievements, which can be confounded with patronage or pay-offs. This need not inevitably be so. The point is that the matter is out of the control of those who decide award policy, and in the hands of others observing the outcomes and deciding what to make of them.

Honor is more than a sop to personal vanity. It is a powerful incentive which accomplishes many social tasks, including tasks that are too arduous and dangerous to be compensated by money—even inducing individuals in crisis situations to sacrifice their lives for the greater good of others. In more mundane matters, honor and respect from one's colleagues and subordinates are important and sometimes indispensable aids, without which even the most talented and conscientious individuals sometimes cannot fulfill their promise. To jeopardize the respect and recognition of individuals from preferred groups by rewarding "honors" tainted with double standards is not only to downgrade their own achievements but also to downgrade their chances of accomplishing those achievements in the first place. For example, minority faculty members have often complained about a lack of intellectual and research interaction with their colleagues, and of being thought of as "affirmative-action" professors. After the media revealed that black students were admitted to the Harvard Medical School with lower qualifications, white patients began to refuse to be examined by such students. The negative effects of tainted honors are by no means limited to academia.

Partial Preferences

THE illusion of control includes the belief that preferential policies can be extended *partway* into a process while maintaining equal treatment in the remainder of the pro-

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cess. For example, in the early days of "affirmative action" in the United States, it was sometimes asserted that special efforts to recruit minority employees or minority students would be followed by equal treatment at the actual selection stage and afterward. Special concern for particular groups might also mean only special scrutiny to see that they were treated equally. President John F. Kennedy's Executive Order No. 10,925 required that employers who were government contractors "take affirmative action to ensure that the applicants are employed, and that employees are treated during employment without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin." That is virtually the antithesis of what "affirmative action" has come to mean today, either in the United States or in other countries where the term refers to statistical results viewed precisely *with regard* to race, color, creed, or national origin.

The concept of preferential concern stopping partway into a process is not confined to employment or to the United States. In India, a government minister has urged a small lowering of university-admissions standards for students from scheduled castes (untouchables) and scheduled tribes, with the proviso that "he was recommending relaxation for admission and not for passing or grading." Similar views were once expressed in the United States, where special recruitment programs for minority students quickly led to lower admission standards for them—and this in turn sometimes led to "affirmative grading," to prevent excessive failures by minority students. Double standards in grading may originate with the individual professor or be a result of administrative pressures. Halfway around the world—in Soviet Central Asia—professors are also pressured to give preferential grading to Central Asian students. In Malaysia, preferential grading is virtually institutionalized. As Gordon P. Means puts it:

> Although grading is supposed to be without reference to ethnicity, all grades must be submitted to an evaluation review committee having heavy Malay representation. Individual faculty members report various instances when grades were unilaterally raised, apparently for purposes of "ethnic balance."

Sometimes preferential grading takes the less direct form of creating special or easier subjects for particular groups, such as Maori Studies in New Zealand, Malay Studies in Singapore, or a variety of ethnic studies in the United States.

Whether in employment, education, or other areas, carefully limited or fine-tuned preferences have repeatedly proved to be illusory. Neither time limitations nor other limitations have in fact stopped their persistence and spread.

A wide variety of moral arguments has been used to justify preferential policies. Some of these arguments have little in common, except for being largely unexamined in the excitement of crusading zeal—and being successful politically. Among the reasons given for preferences are that (1) the group is indigenous; (2) the group has been historically wronged; and (3) the group happens to be less well represented in desirable institutions or occupations, for whatever reason, so that this "imbalance" must be "corrected."

Whatever the arguments for preferential policies, these preferences (as we have seen) can long outlive the validity of those arguments, whether the degree of validity be zero or 100 percent, or anywhere in between. A genuinely disadvantaged group can cling to preferences, or seek more, long after their disadvantages have been redressed. The moral question, therefore, is not simply whether particular groups deserve particular benefits for particular periods of time, or until particular social conditions are achieved. The real question is whether the *actual consequences of the particular processes* being initiated are likely to be justified, morally or otherwise.

Indigenousness

The logic that turns indigenousness into a moral claim is by no means obvious. Claims of being indigenous evoke a sense of solidarity within the beneficiary group—and often also feelings of moral support from outside the beneficiary group. The question is what basis there is for anyone who is not indigenous to take seriously such moral claims by those who are.

Where an indigenous group was once invaded, dispossessed of its lands, or otherwise mistreated by conquerors, the moral condemnation of the latter is based on their actions, not on the indigenousness of the victims. Had they done the same things to people who had settled within the prior century, that would not make it any more right or wrong. Moreover, claims of indigenous preference are not limited to such situations. Malays today claim privileges based on being "sons of the soil"—not against the British, who were the colonial power, but against the Chinese and the Indians, who were not. Similar preferential claims have been advanced by the indigenous peoples of Fiji, Burma, Uganda, and other countries, against groups who never conquered them or even tried to.

One reason indigenous victims may seem especially wronged is that the toil of untold generations may have gone into producing what was taken from them. But, again, this may be equally true (or more true) of people who cannot claim to be indigenous. Were England to be invaded, conquered, and plundered, that would be widely condemned, even though no one familiar with their history would claim that the English are the indigenous people of England. Moreover, in many parts of the world, the indigenous peoples have built few material things of a lasting nature and the conquerors have built much, so that a reconquest by descendants of the original inhabitants would represent more plunder than the original

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conquest. So too would a governmental transfer of what has been created in the meantime.

One of the recurring themes in moral arguments for indigenous preferences is the linkage of the indigenous peoples to their native soil. Phrases like "sons of the soil," in various countries, evoke this image. However, human beings have not created land. Whether indigenous or not, their occupation of it as a group has largely been based on force. When one conquering people is in turn conquered by another, observers may deplore the bloodshed and plunder, but it is difficult to see what moral claim the losing side has against the winners, who have simply been more efficient or more lucky in pursuing the same goals as themselves. Here as elsewhere, where injustice has been done, it is the injustice that is morally significant, not the indigenousness of the victim.

Even in places and times where no credible claim of conquest or plunder can be made against a non-native, non-preferred group, there is often still a feeling that the indigenous people are entitled to preferential treatment in their own homeland. Little or no argument is usually offered for this assertion. At most there may be an allusion to the fact that most peoples "rule the roost" in their own homelands, and that there is psychic discomfort when "foreigners" (even many generations resident in the country) are unduly prominent in the economy or society. This is essentially an argument that what *is* in most places is what *ought* to be in all places. In addition to being a *non sequitur,* this assertion attributes to indigenousness a power that is usually due to being a numerical majority. At its worst, it is an argument that might makes right or an evocation of tribalism that need not be shared by observers who are not of that tribe, and which has no moral basis in any case.

Historical Compensation

The wrongs of history have been invoked by many groups in many countries as a moral claim for contemporary compensation. Much emotional fervor goes into such claims but the question here is about their logic or morality. Assuming for the sake of argument that the historical claims are factually correct, which may not be the case in all countries, to transfer benefits between two groups of living contemporaries because of what happened between two sets of dead people is to raise the question whether any sufferer is in fact being compensated. Only where both wrongs and compensation are viewed as collectivized and inheritable does redressing the wrongs of history have a moral, or even a logical, basis.

The biological continuity of the generations lends plausibility to the notion of group compensation—but only if guilt can be inherited. Otherwise there are simply windfall gains and windfall losses among contemporaries, according to the accident of their antecedents. Moreover, few people would accept this as a general principle to be applied consistently, however much they may advocate it out of compassion (or guilt) over the fate of particular unfortunates. No one would advocate that today's Jews are morally entitled to put today's Germans in concentration camps, in compensation for the Nazi Holocaust. Most people would not only be horrified at any such suggestion but would also regard it as a second act of gross immorality, in no way compensating the first, but simply adding to the sum total of human sins.

Sometimes a more sociological, rather than moral, claim is made that living contemporaries are suffering from the *effects* of past wrongs and that it is these effects which must be offset by compensatory preferences. Tempting as it is to imagine that the contemporary troubles of historically wronged groups are due to those wrongs, this is confusing causation with morality. The contemporary socioeconomic position of groups in a given society often bears no relationship to the historic wrongs they have suffered. Both in Canada and in the United States, the Japanese have significantly higher incomes than the whites, who have a documented history of severe anti-Japanese discrimination in both countries. The same story could be told of the Chinese in Malaysia, Indonesia, and many other countries around the world, of the Jews in countries with virulent anti-Semitism, and a wide variety of other groups in a wide variety of other countries. Among poorer groups as well, the level of poverty often has little correlation with the degree of oppression. No one would claim that the historic wrongs suffered by Puerto Ricans in the United States exceed those suffered by blacks, but the average Puerto Rican income is lower than the average income of blacks.

None of this proves that historic wrongs have no contemporary effects. Rather, it is a statement about the limitations of our knowledge, which is grossly inadequate to the task undertaken and likely to remain so. To pretend to disentangle the innumerable sources of intergroup differences is an exercise in hubris rather than morality.

As one contemporary example of how easy it is to go astray in such efforts, it was repeated for years that the high rate of single-parent, teenage pregnancy among blacks was "a legacy of slavery." Evidence was neither asked nor given. But when serious scholarly research was finally done on this subject, the evidence devastated this widely held belief. The vast majority of black children grew up in two-parent homes, even under slavery itself, and for generations thereafter. The current levels of single-parent, teenage pregnancy are a phenomenon of the last half of the 20th century and are a disaster that has also struck groups with wholly different histories from that of blacks. Passionate commitment to "social justice" can never be a

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substitute for knowing what you are talking about.

Those who attribute any part of the socioeconomic fate of any group to factors internal to that group are often accused of "blaming the victim." This may sometimes be part of an attempt to salvage the historical-compensation principle but it deserves separate treatment.

"Blame" and "Victims"

The illusion of morality is often confused with the reality of causation. If group A originates in a country where certain scientific and technological skills are widespread and group B originates in a country where they are not, then when they immigrate to the same third country, they are likely to be statistically "represented" to very different degrees in occupations and institutions requiring such skills. There is nothing mysterious about this, in causal terms. But those who wish to attribute this disparity to institutional discrimination are quick to respond to any mention of group B's lesser scientific-technological background as a case of "blaming the victim." By making the issue *who* is to blame, such arguments evade or preempt the more fundamental question—whether this is a matter of blame in the first place.

Clearly today's living generation—in any group—cannot be *blamed* for the centuries of cultural evolution that went on before they were born, often in lands that they have never seen. Nor can they be blamed for the fact that the accident of birth caused them to inherit one culture rather than another. In causal terms, it would be a staggering coincidence if cultures evolving in radically different historical circumstances were equally effective for all purposes when transplanted to a new society. Blame has nothing to do with it.

Grievance versus "Justice"

Moralism confuses issues in many ways. For example, justifiable compassion for less fortunate people often shades off into an unjustifiable romanticizing of such people, their leaders, or their leaders' ideas and rhetoric. Groups seeking preferential treatment almost invariably say that they are seeking "justice," whether they are a majority or a minority, previously favored or disfavored, currently better off or worse off than others. When people want *more*, they call *more* "justice." But when groups with a sense of grievance acquire power, locally or nationally, they seldom stop at redressing grievances and seldom exhibit justice toward others.

Nothing is more common than for previously oppressed groups to oppress others when they get the chance. When Poles and Hungarians acquired their own independent nations after World War I, they inaugurated a savage escalation of anti-Semitism. Similarly, after World War II, newly independent nations began oppressing their respective minorities from Indonesia to Sri Lanka to almost all of sub-Saharan Africa. This has included not only the usual forms of discrimination but also mob violence that has killed hundreds in Indonesia and Malaysia, thousands in Sri Lanka, and tens of thousands in Nigeria.

South Africa's white Afrikaners have long been a "grievance-fed" people, as W.H. Hutt called them. Their leaders have kept alive for generations the grievances that caused them to launch a great trek away from British authority to settle new land in the 19th century, the grievances growing out of the two Boer wars they lost against the British, and the economic resentments they felt as a predominantly lower class in an economy dominated by British and Jewish businessmen and financiers. Some of these historic grievances were quite valid—for example, the 25,000 Afrikaner women and children who died in British concentration camps during the second Boer war. However, as Hutt observed: "Races which grumble about the 'injustices' or 'oppressions' to which they are subjected can often be observed to be inflicting not dissimilar injustices upon other races." The Afrikaners' escalation of anti-black laws when they first came to power in a coalition government in 1924 was only a foretaste of the evils of full-scale apartheid which they later imposed after they achieved unchallenged political dominance in 1948.

Similar patterns have existed in the United States. Just as the long-oppressed Irish became one of the groups most hostile to blacks, so today Koreans and Vietnamese refugees operating small businesses in black ghettos in cities around the country are targets of racist propaganda and violence from local black leaders and those whom they incite. The arguments and demands made against them are the same as those made against the Jewish businessmen in the same ghettos a generation earlier or against the Chinese businessmen in Southeast Asia, the Lebanese in Sierre Leone, or small retailing minority groups in countries around the world. What is different is that such racism on the part of some black leaders is passed over in silence by those who normally condemn racism, because their vision automatically casts blacks in the role of victims. But people do not cease being human beings just because they are labeled victims—and if the history of human beings shows anything, it shows repeatedly the desire for self-aggrandizement at the expense of others.

A sense of group grievance is seldom a prelude to just treatment of others. More often it heralds a "Now it's our turn" attitude. No one felt or promoted a sense of being historically aggrieved more than Adolf Hitler.

"Underrepresentation" and "Life Chances"

Quite aside from claims of historic wrongs, the argument has often been made—on grounds of morality as well as

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political or social expediency—that the "underrepresentation" of particular groups in desirable roles is an "imbalance" to be "corrected." Majorities have pressed such claims as readily as minorities, in circumstances where their only disadvantages were their own lack of skills or interest, as well as where a plausible case could be made that imposed disabilities have handicapped them.

Among the many unexamined assumptions behind preferential policies is the belief that intergroup friction is a function of the magnitude of income gaps, so that more social harmony can be achieved by reducing these gaps. As with so much that has been said in this area, evidence has been neither asked nor given, while counter-evidence is plentiful, varied, and ignored.

In Bombay, the hostility of the Maharashtrians has been directed primarily at the South Indians, who are somewhat ahead of them economically, rather than against the Gujaratis, who are far ahead of them. Throughout sub-Saharan Africa, there has historically been far more hostility directed by Africans against Asians than against Europeans, who are economically far ahead of both. A similar pattern is found *within* African groups. In Nigeria, for example, the Yoruba were far ahead of the Ibo economically in 1940, while there was a much smaller gap at that time between the Hausa and the Ibo. Yet the hostility and violence between Hausa and Ibo in that era greatly exceeded any friction between either of these groups and the Yoruba. Later, as the Ibos rose, narrowing the gap between themselves and the Yoruba, it was precisely then that Ibo-Yoruba outbreaks of violence occurred.

Advocates of preferential policies often express a related belief, similarly unsupported by evidence, that an even distribution of groups across sectors of the economy tends to reduce social frictions and hostility. Much history suggests the opposite, that (in the words of Professor Horowitz) "the ethnic division of labor is more a shield than a sword."

THE utter dominance of particular sectors by particular minority groups has been quietly accepted for generations in many countries—until a specific, organized campaign has been whipped up against the minority, often by members of the majority who are seeking to enter the minority-dominated sector and are finding their competition very formidable. Often majority-group customers or suppliers actually prefer dealing with the minority-run entrepreneurs. Even in the midst of ethnic riots against other groups certain middleman minorities have been spared—the Greeks in the Sudan, Hindus in Burma, Marwaris in Assam. Organized boycotts of minority businessmen have been spearheaded by majority-group business rivals, from Uganda and Kenya to the Philippines and the United States. Contrary to what is widely (and lightly) assumed, neither an even representation of groups nor mass resentment at unevenness is "natural."

Repeatedly, in countries scattered around the world, it has been precisely the rise of newly emerging ethnic competitors—whether in business, government, or the professions—which has produced not only friction with groups already dominant in the sectors concerned but also, and much more importantly, has led the newcomers to whip up their whole group emotionally against the already established group. A Sri Lankan legislator noted this pattern early in that country's inter-ethnic troubles:

> University graduates and people like that are the cause of all the trouble—not the vast mass of the Sinhalese people. It is those men, these middle-class unemployed seeking employment, who are jealous of the fact that a few Tamils occupy seats of office in government—these are the people who have gone round the countryside, rousing the masses and creating this problem.

Halfway around the world a similar charge was made, that "the educated Nigerian is the worst peddler of tribalism." In the very different setting of Hungary in the 1880's, the promotion of anti-Semitism was largely the work of students, intellectuals, and sections of the middle classes, while the Hungarian peasant masses remained relatively unresponsive.

Advocates of preferential policies often see these policies as not only promoting social harmony by reducing gaps in income and "representation," but also as part of a more general attempt to "equalize life chances." Much effort is expended establishing the moral desirability of this goal and the extent to which we currently fall short of it, while little or no effort goes into establishing our *capability* to accomplish such a staggering task. One clue to the magnitude and difficulty of what is being attempted are the various ways in which first-born children excel their siblings. A completely disproportionate number of the famous individuals in history were either first-born or the only child. In more mundane achievements as well, the first-born tend to excel. A study of National Merit Scholarship finalists showed that, even in five-child families, the first-born became finalists more often than all the other siblings combined. The same was true in two-, three-, and four-child families. Such disparities, among people born of the same parents and raised under the same roof, mock presumptions of being able to equalize life chances across broader and deeper differences among people in a large, complex, and, especially, multi-ethnic society.

The abstract moral desirability of a goal cannot preempt the prior question of our capacity to achieve it. This is not even a question of falling short of all that might be hoped for. It is a question of risking counterproductive, disastrous, and even bloody results.

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Beneficiaries and Losers

PART of the moral aura surrounding preferential policies is due to the belief that such policies benefit the less fortunate. The losers in this presumed redistribution are seldom specified, though the underlying assumption seems to be that they are the more fortunate.

Empirical evidence for such assumptions is largely lacking and the *a priori* case for believing them is unconvincing. For example, the effects of preferential policies depend on the costs of complementary factors required to use the preferences. These costs can obviously be borne more readily by those who are already more fortunate. Benefits set aside for businessmen of the preferred group are of no use to members of that group who do not happen to own a business, or possess the capital to start one. Preferential admission to medical school is a benefit only to those who have already gone to college. Because preferential benefits tend to be concentrated on more lucrative or prestigious things, they are often within striking distance only for the fortunate few who have already advanced well beyond most other members of the preferred group. In Third World countries, where the great demand is for clerical jobs in the government, the poorer groups in these countries often have difficulty reaching even the modest level of education required for such employment.

Preferential scholarships for Malays in Malaysia are a classic example. Students from families in the lower-income brackets—63 percent of the population—received 14 percent of the university scholarships, while students whose families were in the top 17 percent of the income distribution received more than half of the scholarships. In India, preferential programs for both untouchables and "other backward classes" show the same pattern. In the state of Haryana, 37 different untouchable castes were entitled to preferential scholarships but only 18 actually received any—and just one of these received 65 percent of the scholarships at the graduate levels and 80 percent at the undergraduate level. Similar patterns are found in other parts of the country. In the state of Tamil Nadu, the highest of the so-called "backward classes" (11 percent of the total) received nearly half of all jobs and all university admissions set aside for such classes. The bottom 12 percent received no more than 2 percent of the jobs and university admissions.

In some cases—including the United States—the less fortunate members of a preferred group may actually retrogress while the more fortunate advance under preferential policies. After "affirmative-action" policies took hold in the early 1970's, blacks with little education and little job experience fell further behind the general population—and indeed further behind whites with little education and little job experience. Meanwhile, blacks with college education or substantial job experience advanced economically, both absolutely and relative to whites with the same advantages. Yet another example of the benefits of "affirmative action" to those already more fortunate are the business "set-asides" that give minority entrepreneurs preferential access to government contracts under Section 8(a) of the Small Business Act. Minority businessmen who participate in this program have an average net worth of $160,000. This is not only far higher than the average net worth of the groups they come from, but also higher than the average net worth of Americans in general.

This pattern of simultaneous advance at the top and retrogression at the bottom is not confined to the United States. In India, the era of preferential policies has seen the proportion of untouchables increase significantly among high-level government officials, while the proportion of untouchables who work as landless agricultural laborers has also increased. In Malaysia, the representation of Malays on corporate boards of directors has increased significantly, while the proportion of Malays among the population living below the official poverty level has also increased.

Just as the advocates of preferential policies arbitrarily assume that such policies will benefit the "disadvantaged," so they arbitrarily assume that this will be at the expense of the "privileged." They neither offer evidence of this in advance nor are so impolitic as to collect data on this point after preferential programs have been inaugurated. Such evidence as exists points in the opposite direction. In Bombay, preferential policies to put Maharashtrians into the ranks of business executives had only minor effects on the Gujaratis who were dominant in that occupation, reducing the proportion of Gujarati executives from 52 percent to 44 percent. Among the South Indians, however, their 25-percent representation among Bombay executives was cut in half, to 12 percent. A similar pattern appeared in the very different setting of prewar Hungary, where policies favoring Gentiles had relatively little effect on the Jewish financial and industrial elite but imposed real hardships on the Jewish middle class and lower middle class. In the United States, despite voluminous official statistics on all sorts of racial and ethnic matters, no one seems to have collected data on the actual losers under "affirmative action." It may be significant, however, that those who have protested their losses all the way up to the U.S. Supreme Court have not been named Adams, Cabot, or Rockefeller, but DeFunis, Bakke, and Weber.

II. The Illusion of Compensation

WHAT makes compensation an illusion is not only that sufferers are not in fact compensated, or the effects of historic wrongs redressed—or even accurately identified and separated from innumerable other social factors at work simultaneously. Both the principle

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of compensation and the particular form of compensation via preferential policies require careful examination.

The Principle of Compensation

GIVEN the mortality of human beings, often the only compensation for historic wrongs that is within the scope of our knowledge and control is purely symbolic compensation—taking from individuals who inflicted no harm and giving to individuals who suffered none. In addition to the moral shakiness and social dangers of such a policy, it also promotes a kind of social irredentism, a set of *a priori* grievances against living people, whether or not they have ever inflicted harm on those who feel aggrieved. In view of the futile but bitter and bloody struggles engendered by territorial irredentism, there is little good to hope for by applying this same principle in a new field.

The factual reality that actual benefits from compensatory preferences tend to be concentrated in the already more fortunate elites among the preferred groups makes the moral case for such policies weaker and the social dangers greater. The more educated, articulate, and more politically sophisticated elites have every incentive to whip up group emotions in favor of more and better preferences, despite the increasing group polarization this may produce, and to be intransigent against any suggestion that any such preferences should ever be reduced or ended. This has been a common pattern in the most disparate countries.

In principle, compensation can take many forms, beginning with a simple transfer of money from one group to another. In practice, however, preferential policies are the form taken in many countries around the world. The implications of that particular form, and of its alternatives, raise still more troubling questions.

The Form of Compensation

IF, NOTWITHSTANDING all philosophic objections to the principle of group compensation, such a policy is in fact chosen, then the particular form of the compensation can make a major difference in the costs and the consequences of compensatory policies. When resources, or the benefits they create, are transferred from group A to group B, this is not necessarily—or even likely—a zero-sum process, in which the value of what is lost by one is the same as the value of what is gained by the other. What is transferred may be subjectively valued differently by the losers and the recipients. There may also be objectively discernible differences in the use of the same resources by the two groups.

Compensatory policies may, in theory, take place through transfers of money, transfers of in-kind benefits, or through differential applications of rules and standards. In Australia, for example, various money and in-kind transfers to the aborigines add up to more than $2,000 annually for every aboriginal man, woman, and child. Such transfers arouse relatively little political opposition or social backlash. Similarly, in the United States, monetary compensation for Japanese Americans interned during World War II aroused relatively little controversy—and even that little controversy quickly subsided, once the decision was made.

Such monetary transfers are less costly to individual members of the majority population the more the majority outnumbers the minority receiving the transfer. Obviously, if group A is 100 times as large as group B, each member of group B can receive $100 at a cost of only one dollar to each member of group A. However, even where the losses sustained by one group are significant, monetary transfers may still be efficient, in the narrowly economic sense that what is lost by one group as a whole is gained by another group, with no direct net loss to society as a whole. Whatever the merits or demerits of the particular transfer on other grounds, it is not inefficient. Politically and socially, the opposition to such transfers is therefore unlikely to be as great as opposition to the same net transfers in forms that cost more to the losers than is gained by the gainers. Preferential policies often cost the losers more than is gained by the gainers. Preferential policies, by definition, involve a differential application of rules and standards to individuals originating in different groups. Even where the preferences are not stated in terms of differential rules or standards, but rather in terms of numerical quotas, "goals," or "targets," differences in the qualifications of the respective pools of applicants can readily make numerical similarities amount to differences in standards. This is a very common result in countries around the world. In Nigeria, programs to have college-student populations reflect "the federal character" of the country—i.e., tribal quotas under regional names—led to a situation where cut-off scores for admission to the same college varied substantially between students from different tribes or regions. In Sri Lanka, demographic "standardization" policies led to similar disparities in qualification requirements for individuals from different regions of the country. In India, attempts to meet quotas for untouchable students led to drastic reductions in the qualifications they needed for admission to various institutions. Where applicant pools in different groups are different in qualifications, numerical quotas are equivalent to different standards. Therefore preferential policies in general, however phrased, are essentially an application of different rules or standards to individuals from different groups. The question then is: what are the effects of transfers between groups in this particular form?

There are many ways in which intergroup transfers through differential standards can be-

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come negative-sum processes, in which what is lost by one group exceeds what is gained by another, thus representing a direct loss to society as a whole—as well as causing indirect losses, due to a larger resistance or backlash than if the recipient group had obtained the same value or benefit in some other form. An obvious example is when a particular group, in which 90 percent of the students admitted to college succeed in graduating, loses places to another group in which only 30 percent of the students graduate. Group A must lose 900 graduates, in order for group B to gain 300 graduates. It might be objected that this overstates the net loss, since there may be some marginal benefit simply from having attended college, even without graduating. Offsetting this, however, is the fact that groups with lower qualifications tend to specialize in easier and less remunerative fields, whether in India, Malaysia, the Soviet Union, or the United States. Therefore group A may lose 900 graduates largely concentrated in mathematics, science, and engineering, while group B gains 300 graduates largely concentrated in sociology, education, and ethnic studies.

The *apparent* losses to one group under preferential policies may also far exceed the real losses, thereby further raising the indirect social costs of backlash and turmoil. For example, an observer of India's preferential policies for untouchables (known officially as "scheduled castes") has commented:

> . . . we hear innumerable tales of persons being deprived of appointments in favor of people who ranked lower than they did in the relevant examinations. No doubt this does happen, but if all these people were, in fact, paying the price for appointments to Scheduled Castes, there would be many more SC persons appointed than there actually are. To illustrate: supposing that 300 people qualify for ten posts available. The top nine are appointed on merit but the tenth is reserved, so the authorities go down the list to find an SC applicant. They find one at 140 and he is appointed. Whereupon all 131 between him and the merit list feel aggrieved. He has not taken 131 posts; he has taken one, yet 131 people believe they have paid the price for it. Moreover, the remaining 159 often also resent the situation, believing that their chances were, somehow, lessened by the existence of SC reservations.

Where certain opportunities are rigidly "set aside" for particular groups, in the sense that members of other groups cannot have them, even if these opportunities remain unused, then there is the potential for a maximum of grievance for a minimum of benefit transfer. Admission to medical school in India's state of Gujarat operates on this principle—and has led repeatedly to bloody riots in which many people have died. Reservations or "set-asides" in general tend to provoke strong objections. The first major setback for "affirmative action" in the U.S. Supreme Court was based on objections to reserved-admissions places for minority applicants in the 1978 *Bakke* case. A later major setback occurred in *City of Richmond* v. *Croson* (1989), where minority business set-asides were struck down by the Supreme Court. Similarly, in India, an exhaustive, scholarly legal study of preferential policies found: "Virtually all of the litigation about compensatory discrimination has involved reservations, even though preferences in the form of provisions of facilities, resources, and protections directly affect a much larger number of recipients." This litigation has been initiated mostly by non-preferred individuals who complain of being adversely affected. In some ultimate sense, non-preferred individuals are just as much adversely affected by preferences in other forms that direct resources away from them and toward preferred groups. But it is preference in the specific form of "reservation" or "set-aside" that seems most to provoke both violence and litigation.

By contrast, resource transfers designed to enable disadvantaged groups to meet standards are accepted while attempts to bring the standards down to them are overwhelmingly rejected. In the United States, preferential policies have repeatedly been rejected in public-opinion polls. However, the same American public has strongly supported "special educational or vocational courses, free of charge, to enable members of minority groups to do better on tests." More than three-fifths of all whites even support "requiring large companies to set up special training programs for members of minority groups." The issue is not simply whether one is for or against the advancement of particular groups or is willing to see transfers of resources for their betterment. The method by which their betterment is attempted matters greatly in terms of whether such efforts have the support or the opposition of others.

III. Replacing Illusions

With all the empirical weaknesses, logical flaws, and social dangers of preferential policies, why have they become so popular and spread so rapidly around the world? One reason is that their *political* attractions are considerable. They offer an immediate response—a quick fix—at relatively little government expense, to the demands of vocal, aroused, and often organized elites, speaking in the name of restive masses. This restiveness of the masses is by no means incidental. Violence has frequently preceded preferences, from the American ghetto riots of the 1960's to the Malay and Indonesian riots against the Chinese at about the same time, to terrorism in India, and massive mob violence against the Tamils in Sri Lanka. This violence by the masses is typically used politically to promote elite purposes via preferential policies. An international study of ethnic conflicts concluded:

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Preferences tend to respond to middle-class aspirations almost entirely. They do little or nothing about the resentments of those who do not aspire to attend secondary school or university, to enter the modern private sector or the bureaucracy, or to become businessmen. Although lower-class resentments are often profound—it is not, after all, the middle class that typically participates in ethnic violence—the resentments may have nothing to do with occupational mobility and preferences do not address them.

Preferential policies, then, are politically attractive as a response, however socially ineffective or counterproductive such policies may later prove to be in practice. At a sufficiently superficial level, the moral attractions of preferential policies are considerable as well. Even in South Africa, moral appeals were made on behalf of a "civilized labor policy"—protecting European workers' customary standard of living from being undercut by Africans and Indians accustomed to living on less—and clergy, intellectuals, and others not personally benefiting joined in support of these policies on that basis. Preferential policies allow intellectuals as well as politicians to be on the side of the angels (as locally defined at the time) at low cost—or rather, at a low down payment, for the real costs come later, and have sometimes been paid in blood.

The last refuge of a failed policy is "the long run," in which it will supposedly be a success. In other words, those who predicted the short run wrongly ask to be trusted with the much harder task of predicting the long run rightly. This argument, used to defend the counterproductive effects of preferential policies, is far less defensible in an international perspective where older preferential policies (as in India or Sri Lanka) have progressed from intergroup political hostility to bloodshed in the streets and deaths by the thousands, while newer programs (as in the United States) are still in the process of increasing group polarization, and the even more recent preferential policies taking shape in Australia and New Zealand are still at the stage of optimistic predictions.

Even the most damning indictment of a policy is almost certain to be met with the response: "But what would you replace it with?" However effective as a political tactic, such a question confuses rather than clarifies. It is like an arbitrary prohibition against saying that the emperor has no clothes, until a complete wardrobe has been designed. The question misconceives policy, and human actions in general, in yet another way: no one who extinguishes a forest fire or removes a cancer has to "replace" it with anything. We are well rid of evils.

This is not to say that none of the aspects of social issues raised during "affirmative-action" controversies should ever be addressed by public policy. The case for public policy in general, or for a particular public policy, must be made on the individual merits of the particular issues raised—but not as a general "replacement" for some discredited policy.

What must be replaced are the social illusions and misconceptions underlying preferential policies, for any alternative policy based on the same illusions and misconceptions will have the same fatal weaknesses in its structure. In some countries and for some purposes social policy may wish to ameliorate the lot of the less fortunate or make it possible for individuals or groups to acquire the knowledge and skills necessary for their own advancement. It is infinitely more important that such efforts be based on facts and logic than that there be one particular scheme selected from innumerable possibilities as the uniquely designated "replacement" for existing policy.

We may or may not be able to agree on what the ideal, or even a viable, policy must be. What we can agree on is far more fundamental: We can agree to *talk sense*. That will mean abandoning a whole vocabulary of political rhetoric which preempts factual questions by arbitrarily calling statistical disparities "discrimination," "exclusion," "segregation," and the like. It will mean confronting issues instead of impugning motives. It will mean specifying goals and defending those specifics, rather than speaking in terms of seeking some nebulously unctuous "change" or "social justice." Perhaps more than anything else, talking sense will mean examining policies in terms of the incentives they create, and the results to which these incentives lead, rather than the hopes they embody. It will mean that evidence takes precedence over assertion and reiteration.

IV. Incentives versus Hopes

"Temporary" Preferences

MANY of the factual findings of this study will be surprising only because incentives have not usually been the focus of discussions of preferential policies. For example, given the incentives, it can hardly be surprising that preferential policies do not become temporary merely because their proponents use the word "temporary." The incentives are to do exactly what has been done, in country after country: extend and expand both the preferences and the list of beneficiaries, not to mention those individuals who make themselves beneficiaries through fraud.

Once we face up to the fact that "temporary" preferences are not likely to be temporary in reality, and that the group whose history provides the moral rationale for initiating preferential policies is unlikely to remain the sole group preferred in a multi-ethnic society, the real issue then becomes: what are the probable consequences of an enduring policy of group preferences for the whole range of groups that will probably get them? The answer to that question will depend,

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not on what rationales there are for preferences, but rather on what *incentives* these policies create—including incentives for members of the preferred group, for members of other groups likely to seek preferences, for members of groups likely to resent and react to preferences, and for a whole group-consciousness industry that acquires a vested interest in agitating emotional issues in an ever more tense, polarized, and even explosive atmosphere.

The moral issue is then no longer whether group A or B deserves compensatory preferences, but whether groups C, D, E, etc., also deserve such preferences—especially if these latter groups are larger, more educated, or otherwise better-positioned to use the preferences, thereby diluting or destroying the value of preferences for group A or B, who may have stronger moral claims or more urgent social needs. As the cases of untouchables in India and blacks in the United States both illustrate, it is all too easy for a tragically unfortunate group of people to be used simply as an entering wedge to create benefits going largely to others in much more fortunate circumstances, whether those others are within their own racial or social group or numerous outsiders to whom the preferential principle is successively extended. Clearly, no recitation of the historic oppressions suffered by blacks can justify preferences for white, middle-class women, whom some believe to be the principal beneficiaries of the acceptance of the preferential principle.

Both in India and in the United States, a point is ultimately reached where the initially designated beneficiaries of preferential policies begin to object to the continued extension of that status to others. Thus blacks objected to legislation in the Louisiana House of Representatives which extended "minority" status to Cajuns. In India, untouchable leader Dr. B.R. Ambedkar fought successfully against the extension of central-government preferences to members of the "other backward classes" in the Indian constitution.

An analysis of preferential policies in terms of the incentives they create cannot treat preferences as simply a benefit added to existing social processes. Preferential policies change the very nature of processes—whether these be hiring processes, college-admissions processes, or other social processes. An employer who was once free to choose among job applicants on the basis of his own assessments of their ability to do the job must, after preferential policies, consider also how readily his decision can be justified to third parties, in terms that will be understood and accepted by those who are less knowledgeable about his business, who were not present at the interview, and who would have less experience on which to base an assessment such as he made. "Objective" criteria in general and educational credentials in particular are likely to gain more weight under these circumstances because third parties can understand such things, even if other qualities are in fact more important on the job. The growth of credentialism can further disadvantage less fortunate groups, especially if preferences have also been extended to other groups with more credentials—e.g., middle-class white women in America as compared to black males. There can be *fewer* job opportunities for less educated black males after preferential policies that extend far beyond them to encompass groups better able to play the game under the new rules.

Where preferential policies apply not only to the initial intake (hiring, college admissions) but also to subsequent progress (promotions, college grades, honors), the incentives created can operate at cross purposes. For example, the requirement that initial intake numbers be reported to third parties tends, by itself, to create incentives to hire more of the designated group. However, the knowledge that this group's subsequent progress must also be reported—and can become the basis for costly litigation and large damage awards—inhibits the hiring of individuals from the preferred group, unless they seem more "safe" than individuals who can be readily demoted or terminated because they come from groups without legal preferences. Which of these contending tendencies will predominate in the actual decisions can vary with the industry or activity, the nature of the pools of applicants, the policies and practices of the third-party observers, and whether the decision-maker is spending his own money or the taxpayers' money. The point here is that, once more, the changes in the nature of the process induced by preferential processes need not increase the opportunities of the officially preferred group—and may, on net balance, *reduce* those opportunities. Where the existence of preferential policies also leads to a slackening of efforts among the preferred group, then the dangers of counterproductive results are further increased.

Abstract possibilities of counterproductive results from preferential policies are by no means conclusive. However, they do make it easier to understand empirical patterns observed in the United States, India, and Malaysia, where (as noted above) the poorer members of the preferred group have actually *retrogressed* during the same span of time when the group's elite has advanced dramatically. Preferential policies unequivocally create an increased demand for the "safe" and credentialed members of the preferred group, while making the less educated, less skilled, and less experienced members a more risky gamble for an employer than they would be in the absence of preferences. This is especially so in the United States, where preferences are predicated on prior discrimination and on continuing dangers of discrimination, with statistical disparities often being equated with such discrimination in courts of law, which can make multimillion-dollar damage awards to those judged to be victims.

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Evasions of Preferences

GIVEN the differing costs of discrimination to those in government who impose preferential policies and businessmen in the private sector who are required to carry them out, it can hardly be surprising that both opposition and evasions have been aroused against such policies in country after country.

In the absence of an understanding of incentives, explanations tend to account for evasion or opposition to preferential policies by a hostility to the particular groups designated as beneficiaries of these policies. Clearly this cannot explain widespread white evasions of policies designed to help whites, as in South Africa, where for years the government has been fining white businessmen for hiring more blacks and in higher occupations than they are legally allowed to. Economic incentives, rather than humanitarianism, have been behind such widespread evasions of the "color bar" in South Africa in times past and of apartheid laws more recently. Once the *multiple* sources of resistance to preferential policies are admitted, it is no longer possible to attribute automatically the failures of such policies to "institutional racism," "unconscious bias," or similar explanations, *without evidence*. Circular reasoning cannot substitute for evidence.

Incentives allow discussions to proceed in terms of the actual decision-makers involved, individual or institutional, seeking their own specific self-interest rather than in terms of some arbitrarily collectivized "society," "power structure," or other such construct not corresponding to any empirically demonstrable decision-making unit. The poetic license of speaking of "society" as acting this way or that is a declaration of intellectual bankruptcy, as far as empirical evidence is concerned. Such metaphors are an evasion of crucial questions about incentives and causation.

Incentives of Activists

UNELECTED "spokesmen" who speak boldly to the media in the name of groups seeking or receiving preferential policies are a common social phenomenon from New Zealand to Britain to North America. There are also common patterns in their pronouncements, reflecting common incentives facing them. Any fundamental reexamination of the assumptions behind preferential policies—and still more so, any resulting change of policies—can expect to encounter their vocal, bitter, and determined opposition, including inevitable charges of racism against outsiders, labels of "traitor" put on any members of their own group who disagree publicly with them, and whatever other claims or charges seem likely to be politically effective.

The common thread of group activists around the world is separatism. Insofar as their group, whether a majority or a minority, reaches a modus vivendi with other groups, there is less of a role for group activists. Accordingly, group activists often seek separate languages, separate institutions, and even separate territories. Even where most of the group already speaks the language of the surrounding society, as among the Maoris of New Zealand, group activists seek to reconstitute artificially a separate language community. In Australia, all-aborigine schools have been established, emphasizing the teaching of the aboriginal languages.

Unrealizable demands are another common feature of group activists, whether these demands are for massive "reparations" payments for slavery for blacks in the United States or for making the Maori language the official language of New Zealand. While demands that can be met might benefit the group, demands that cannot be met benefit the group activist. The point is "to create the appropriate climate for bitter recriminations," as an observer of Australian aboriginal activists put it. Sometimes, through miscalculation, a demand may be made that can be and is met—in which case, what is conceded must then be denounced as paltry and insultingly inadequate, however important it may have been depicted as being when it seemed unattainable.

Threats of catastrophe if their demands are not met are another common tactic of group activists. An aboriginal activist in Australia described the aborigines as being of a radically different culture, as "totally frustrated and angry with white society," so that unless whites get rid of their "inbuilt bias and prejudice," he predicted "there's going to be an absolute disaster in Australia." He concluded: "We've got to find alternative principles if humanity is to survive." By contrast, one of the few aborigines actually *elected* by aborigines depicted his people as sharing many of the values and aspirations of white Australians, offered no such apocalyptic view of the future, and declared that many of the activists' ideas were foreign to aboriginal culture, though congenial to "the trendy middle classes."

A key factor in the success of vocal activists around the world is their ability to strike a responsive chord in the "trendy middle classes" in the name of a group which has not elected them and which often has views radically different from theirs. Such activists are not "leaders" of their people in any meaningful sense. That fact can only become more painfully clear if a fundamental change in public policy makes the internal development of the group the prime focus. In such a situation today's group activists would have little role to play except that of attempting to discredit or sabotage the effort. They may be politically very formidable in that role, however.

V. Presumptions versus People

PREFERENTIAL policies are generally intended to favor groups currently "underrepresented" in desirable occupations or

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institutions. Both majorities and minorities have equated statistical inequalities with moral inequities. In extreme cases—not necessarily rare cases—the presumption that groups would be evenly represented in various sectors and levels of society, in the absence of discrimination, has become a belief almost hermetically sealed off from any logical or empirical argument. Criticism is dismissed as malevolently motivated, evidence as culturally biased, criteria as irrelevant.

Evidence that clearly contradicts the vision has often been hidden by redefinition. For example, where the assumption is that the lower economic position of non-whites is due to discrimination by whites, non-white groups who have been successful in the same society are an obvious embarrassment to the proponents of the theory. In Britain, this has led to a redefinition of all non-white groups, including Asians, as "black." Thus Asians disappear as a separate group by verbal sleight-of-hand, as the collective economic, educational, and other performances of "blacks" as a whole are compared to those of whites. In the United States, a similar burying of discordant evidence is achieved by using the ponderous phrase "people of color" to encompass all non-whites, thereby swamping the above-average income statistics of Chinese and Japanese Americans under the larger numbers of below-average income statistics from blacks and other low-income, non-white groups. In Canada, the lumping-together phrase is "visible minorities." It too helps conceal the fact that some non-white groups in Canada are more prosperous than some white groups. The particular words used to lump disparate groups together differ from country to country but the tactic is the same.

In short, no matter what the evidence says, the vision is protected from it. Such heads-I-win-and-tails-you-lose arguments have become as commonplace among group activists in Britain as in the United States. Implicit in this vision is the assumption that the respective pools of potential group "representatives" are not substantially different or that the differences are not relevant. This assumption is contradicted by objective evidence from around the world as to the large variations—both qualitative and quantitative—in educational achievement between groups in the same society, whether India, Israel, Sri Lanka, Nigeria, Malaysia, or the United States.

Non-quantifiable differences are not necessarily any less important factors in statistical disparities, though such differences are often dismissed as "stereotypes." However, so-called "stereotypes" about group behavior often show a certain consistency between what group members say about themselves and what others say about them, though the connotations may differ. Many backward groups from Burma to Guyana "view themselves as the major obstacle to their own advancement," as Donald Horowitz's study showed. Nor can these groups be dismissed as brainwashed minorities, full of "self-hate." Majorities in charge of their own preferential programs have also confronted their own behavior as a factor inhibiting the progress they wish to make. This was perhaps nowhere more candidly stated than in an official Malaysian government publication which criticized the Malays' "unwillingness to work and take risks," their lack of "skills and initiative," and their "practice of assigning to others for specific remuneration the use of licenses granted to them."

In the very different setting of Hungary, in 1940, Hungary's long-time regent, Admiral Miklós Horthy, wrote to the Prime Minister:

> As regards the Jewish problem, I have been an anti-Semite through all my life. I have never had contact with Jews. I have considered it intolerable that here in Hungary every factory, bank, large fortune, business, theater, press, commercial enterprise, etc., should be in the hands of Jews, and that Jews should be the image reflected of Hungary, especially abroad. Since, however, one of the most important tasks of the government is to raise the living standards (i.e., we have to acquire wealth), it is impossible, in a year or two, to eliminate the Jews, who have everything in their hands, and to replace them by incompetent, most unworthy big-mouth elements, for we would become bankrupt. This requires a generation at least.

Surely Malays and Hungarian Gentiles are not the only people on this planet whose own behavior patterns have been among the factors inhibiting their progress. Yet any such candid recitation of such patterns among many other groups in other countries would automatically be denounced as "blaming the victim"—not only by political activists but even by scholars. Any suggestion of difficulties in finding qualified members of any group for any job is likely to be dismissed as a lame excuse, even in courts of law. In the United States, the unbridled vilification of the Moynihan Report in 1965 marked virtually the beginning of the end of candid discussions of minority groups. Ironically, the Moynihan Report was a plea for more government help for blacks, and what it said about social conditions within the black community had already been said by black scholars, including some who joined in the vilification of Moynihan. Moreover, the candor of the Moynihan Report did not begin to approach the painful frankness of *Black Bourgeoisie* by E. Franklin Frazier, the outstanding black sociologist.

ANY policy that attempts to advance the interests of any group in any country must begin with the reality of their situation—not with hermetically sealed visions that offer psychic comfort or politically useful illusions benefiting a relative handful of elite or activist individuals. It is far more important to understand what a viable policy must be based on than to

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narrow arbitrarily the range of such possible policies to one specified "solution."

Denial of any group's internal problems can mean denying a history of long and sometimes heroic efforts to overcome those problems. The role of the Catholic Church in socially uplifting the Irish in America is just one of these historic efforts leading to the transformation of a people. Both blacks and whites participated in successful efforts to develop an educated class among blacks in the first generation after slavery and on into the 20th century. The "Jewish Enlightenment" in Europe and the spectacular rise of the Scots in the 18th century are other examples of a kind of valuable human experience that is often ignored today because to admit that there were internal problems in the first place would shatter the hermetically sealed vision.

One symptom of the determined refusal to examine the characteristics of a group nominated for preferences is the setting of numerical "goals" *without the slightest mention* of the size of the pool of qualified people from whom these goals are to be met. Where the problem of pool size is even obliquely acknowledged, it is often in the context of establishing numerical goals for the pool itself—which simply pushes the same issue back one stage. Ultimately, this logically leads back to childhood and the values of the home and the group. When Maori students, admitted under preferential policies at New Zealand's University of Auckland, fail to show up for tutorials as often as other students, their academic failures cannot be attributed automatically to institutional racism or to not having enough "role models"—not if the purpose is to advance Maoris rather than to score ideological points.

VI. Politics versus Progress

The ingredients of political success and the ingredients of social progress are not only different but often antithetical. Nothing was more politically successful than the preferential policies which led Sri Lanka into race riots, atrocities, and civil war. Even Marxist parties, ideologically opposed to ethnic-group preferences, were forced by electoral disasters to advocate such policies as the price of political survival. Preferential policies in Pakistan were politically robust enough to survive and flourish after their initial beneficiary group, the East Bengalis, seceded to form the separate nation of Bangladesh. Preferential policies in Nigeria began before independence and survived in varying forms through changes in constitutions, military coups, and a civil war that took over a million lives. The political success of preferential policies in Guyana, India, and Malaysia has likewise been impressive.

What has been far less impressive is the social record of preferential policies. However beneficial to the elites of preferred groups, such policies have helped raise the masses from poverty to prosperity only in South Africa, where the once urgent "poor-white" problem among the Afrikaners has been solved by the ruthless sacrifice of the interests of the vastly larger non-white population and the relentless suppression of their resistance. Yet it is by no means clear that the long-run costs of this social "success" will prove to be worth it, even for South African whites, many of whom have begun emigrating to other countries in anticipation of trouble in the years ahead.

The reasons for the political success of preferential policies highlight the political difficulties of alternative policies designed to enable genuinely unfortunate people to advance. Preferential policies allow large promises about the future to be made by politicians at small immediate cost to the government. Such policies reward vocal leaders of the preferred groups by creating benefits focused on their class and flatter the group as a whole that its problems are caused by other people, whose wrongdoing or unfair advantages will be suppressed by government. This approach fits in neatly with various "liberation" themes, whose essential message is that other people are to blame for one's troubles. With the complex difficulties and painful trade-offs involved in social advancement reduced to the simple level of group conflict, the issue can be presented and its goals defined in terms politically comprehensible to all. Conflict has obvious media appeal as well and moralists and intellectuals can choose the side considered to be that of the angels. Politicians benefit by gaining the political support of the beneficiary groups. Where those groups do not constitute a majority, then the preferential policies can nevertheless succeed politically by keeping a low profile, by being redefined as antidiscrimination efforts, or by being justified by such moral rationales as will mollify the majority.

Consider, by contrast, the political situation facing a program which genuinely intends to aid the advancement of less fortunate people by improving those people's education, skills, and habits. Such a program must take far more time, probably cost far more money, and cannot provide either the group conflict so useful to the media or the sense of moral superiority so much in demand by crusaders or others who want to be on the side of the angels. The scope and pace of genuine advancement for less fortunate masses cannot produce as dramatic results as a doubling or tripling of group members in a few elite positions within a few years under preferential policies. If thousands more minority women who might have become maids become secretaries instead, that is still not as dramatic as having three minority cabinet members instead of one, even though far more people would be benefited by the former, including people far more in need of help. Politically, symbolic representation in visible high-level positions "sells." Preferential policies can deliver that better and faster than any policy

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of helping less fortunate masses advance. Most important of all, it can deliver before the next election.

Education is widely recognized as a key factor in the advancement of individuals and groups. Whether in India or the United States or in other countries, the tendency is to focus efforts at the visible, high-level end of education—at the colleges and universities, including postgraduate education. Obviously, the genuinely less fortunate seldom reach these levels. If they are to be helped, the help must come much earlier in the educational process and the task will be infinitely more difficult than lowering admissions standards in higher education to achieve statistical representation. Moreover, the struggle will not be the kind of struggle between groups, or between good and evil, that the media can dramatize but instead a harder, slower, and less glamorous struggle between the inherent requirements of quality education and the habits, attitudes, and beliefs of people who have not had to deal with such requirements before. School disrupters will have to be dealt with as problems to be gotten rid of, rather than as victims to be defended by in-group organizations or "public-interest" lawyers from the general society.

Even assuming that all of these educational difficulties can be overcome and high-quality students begin to emerge from the system, they will not emerge from high school for another twelve years, from college for sixteen years, or from postgraduate education and professional apprenticeship levels for twenty years. Such time spans are simply beyond the horizon of politicians whose focus is the next election. Genuine educational improvement is at a clear disadvantage politically in competing with preferential policies that can offer a "quick fix" before the voters go to the polls. Even if there are early signs that a program is starting to work, rising test scores in Harlem elementary schools will never carry the same political weight as appointing a few more high-level minority officials or even increasing the number of minority students admitted to the city's colleges and universities without meeting the standards required of others.

Could some judicious blend of preferential programs and programs designed to improve the performances of less educated groups work? Here the problem is that the two kinds of programs create incentives that work at cross-purposes, even if their goals are the same. Forcing students to meet higher standards—a painful process for them and their teachers alike—will be made all the more difficult if the students know that these standards are unnecessary for them to reach whatever educational or employment goals they have, or even to be promoted to the next grade. If group-representation statistics are the standard by which institutions will be judged, other standards will be sacrificed for the sake of body count. This is true not only of educational institutions but of other institutions as well.

Political feasibility is the greatest obstacle to new policies with an overriding goal of advancing the less fortunate because time is the key ingredient in such advancement on a large scale. Even in the extreme case of South Africa, where massive transfers of the nation's resources were focused on a small minority of its people, in *addition* to preferential policies pursued in utter disregard of the losses and even tragedies suffered by others as a result, it was decades before the Afrikaner "poor whites" became middle-class. Only in terms of political appearances are preferential policies a "quick fix." The dangers of an actual retrogression among the masses of the beneficiary group cannot be dismissed, either from an analytical or an empirical perspective. Even greater dangers have materialized in countries that have experienced bloodshed in the wake of group polarization brought on by preferential policies.

While current political feasibility may be the touchstone of the professional politician, it cannot be the last word for others. In many countries, what is most politically feasible are policies that further a continued drift in the direction of group polarization and the dangers and disasters this entails. Specific alternative policies will differ for different groups and different countries. What is crucial is that these alternatives be examined in terms of the *incentives* they create and the results to which such incentives can be expected to lead—regardless of the rationales, aspirations, or symbolism of these policies. Determining in this way what *should* be done is not an exercise in utopianism, for once there is a consensus on what needs to be done, that in itself changes what is politically feasible.

The starting point for rethinking and reform must be a recognition that "affirmative action" has been a failure in the United States and a disaster in other countries that have had such policies longer. Indeed, a growing polarization and increasing numbers of ugly racial incidents (especially on campuses that are strongholds of "affirmative action") may be early warnings that we too may be moving from the stage of mere failure to the stage of social disaster.

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Between Passovers

Ruth R. Wisse

THE miracle of Passover was renewed for our family when my parents decided to make their own seder in 1941. This was six months, almost to the day, after we had arrived in Montreal from Europe, and there must have been a terrible desperation about it because when I raised the subject recently with my mother, she was too agitated to respond and later explained that my questioning had dug open a pit before her eyes—"*hot mir oyfge'efnt a grub far di oygn.*"

It is my—our—seder, not that of my parents, that I really mean to tell about, but all its pleasures spring from the seders of my childhood. Had my parents not decided to renew the custom of *their* parents, there would have been no tradition of song and story for us to inherit. In my husband's family, though the seder was treated with full seriousness, it consisted of no more than a hearty meal with matzah in place of bread. Anyway, Passover seems always to have begun with the inherited past: the children of Israel, when they escaped from Egypt into the desert, knew that the Paschal lamb they consumed was not some new spring ritual, but the reclamation of a much older rite which their forefathers had practiced before the Pharaohs turned them into slaves.

My parents had never made a real seder before coming to Montreal. In 1931, the year following their marriage, my mother had spent Passover in a Cracow hospital undergoing ear surgery. She was then in the very late stages of pregnancy; when my brother was born on May Day, and the workers from the factory where my father was chief engineer paraded and sang outside her window—*that*, for her, was liberation. I gather that during the few years they spent in the Polish industrial town where my father's factory was located, they would mark Passover with a few of their friends at something resembling a thanksgiving meal.

The 1930's passed for them in a blur. While the rest of the world sank into economic mire, my father came to direct the construction of a new factory in Czernowitz, Rumania, where he brought his wife and (by then) two children to settle. The younger of these children, a girl, died short of her second birthday, and I was born not long after that, so that when my parents fled the city in June 1940, they again had two children, only not the same ones; two more would be born in Canada. During their eventful sojourn in Czernowitz they attended annually the communal seder of *Massada*—a mildly Zionist organization, really more like a cultural club, for Jewish professionals and their wives. Once, probably before I was born, they made the trip back to my father's birthplace of Bialystok to celebrate at Grandfather's table.

It was from his father that my father derived his *nusach*—his manner of chanting the text, the Haggadah, and of conducting the seder. My grandfather, a man of intelligence and learning, had honed his tongue to compensate for the steady decline of his eyesight; by the time he was blind, about age forty, he had become a fearful wit. And more than a wit: about such as my blind grandfather Shakespeare wrote, "A man may see how this world goes with no eyes." At the seder of 1939, which we missed because my brother and I had scarlet fever, Grandfather told the assembled family members that they must set out for Canada to buy a textile factory, and thus transplant their business to the new continent. He directed his second son and eldest grandson to leave immediately after the holidays; such was his authority that they did, buying a mill in the Province of Quebec where unemployment and anti-Semitism were both at a peak (ours being one of the very few cases in which the exigency of the former phenomenon would outweigh the virulence of the latter). My parents, my brother, and I were the last ones to make it to safety. The war trapped my grandfather in Bialystok along with his only daughter and her family who had remained behind to care for him. They did not survive.

Is it any wonder that I sometimes think Passover was created for my sake, commemorating my family's miraculous flight, just as the Haggadah says, "from slavery to freedom, from sorrow to joy, from mourning to holiday, from darkness to great light, and from bondage to redemption," and absorbing our own private selves into the vast national drama?

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THIS is how the drama begins. After the customary blessings, the youngest willing child, coached for days by parents and teachers, opens with four questions:

> Why does this night differ from all other nights: for on all other nights we eat either leavened or unleavened bread; why on this night only unleavened bread? On all other nights we eat all kinds of herbs; why on this night only bitter herbs? On all other nights we need not dip our herbs even once; why on this night must we dip them twice? On all other nights we eat either sitting up or reclining; why on this night do we all recline?*

But once questions begin, who determines where they shall stop? "Why do we drink four glasses of wine?" asked a four-year-old at our seder this year. "Why does freedom have to be celebrated by such exhaustively bourgeois preparations?" I used to ask when I first began to make a seder. "Why do we deserve to be at this table when our fellow Jews, let alone so many other members of the human family, enjoy no such bounty?" Today, no matter who conducts the reading of the Haggadah, those of us who once sat at my father's table continue to imitate his cadence, stopping as he did from time to time to ask a question, to comment on a passage, to sing a song. For years our discussion took place in Yiddish, the language of our home and of all my parents' friends. Once we began bringing friends, Father moved from Yiddish to English, depending on who was being addressed. Everyone was encouraged to interrupt, thus creating an inevitable tension between the Haggadah and the *kneidlakh*, between the reading and the matzah-ball soup.

"*Avodim hoyinu lefaroh bemitsra-yim. . . .* " The adults approach their formal response to the four questions with a paradox that each generation of Jewish geniuses discovers for itself:

> We were Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt, and the Lord, our God, brought us forth from there with a mighty hand and an outstretched arm. And if the Holy One, blessed be He, had not brought our forefathers forth from Egypt, then we, our children, and our children's children would still be Pharaoh's slaves in Egypt.
>
> So, even though all of us were wise, all of us full of understanding, all of us elders, all of us knowing in the Torah, we should still be under the commandment to tell the story of the departure from Egypt. And the more one tells the story of the departure from Egypt, the more praiseworthy he is.

First, then, a précis of the text that will serve as the basis of our commentary; then a bow to the spirit in which the story will be told. The second paragraph is one my father would recite with heavy emphasis, loving the way it twitted us "intellectuals" while playing up to our vanity. He knew just how confidently his own youthful circle had once trusted in the exclusive powers of reason and enlightenment to guide them through life. Leon Trotsky's voice, when my father heard it as a boy in Moscow, had drowned out the more balanced Jewish faith he had imbibed from his own father. So too most of the other adults at our seder in the 40's and 50's, writers and teachers, had once quit what they regarded as the chauvinistic prattle of their parents' Passover table to join the Revolution, the International, the Bund—one or another branch of the secular vanguard. Now they were drawn back to the Haggadah, not in nostalgia or repentance but in amazement at the poor exchange they had made.

The Haggadah long ago anticipated that while a "wise son" might ask to be instructed in the customs of the tradition, a "wicked son" would throw them back in his father's face, while a "simpleton" would lack either the interest or the capacity to understand in full. My father used to like to point out that the difference between the wise and the wicked son lies in tone rather than in diction: the one speaks respectfully, the other poses almost the identical questions, but rudely. The iconography that accompanies the parable of the Four Sons usually portrays the fourth, the one "who does not know how to ask," as very young. In my family we have come to identify him as the deprived offspring of the wicked son—after all, had our parents not taken up the unraveling threads of the tradition, we might never have learned to put the questions either.

I ADORED the intellectual excitement of the seder. My model was the five rabbis, who, according to the legend, tell about the departure from Egypt all night long, until their disciples come to them and say, "Masters, the time has come to read the morning *shema*." For years I pictured myself as a participant in that all-night session where the talk would be so stimulating that dawn would catch us unawares. Later at school I learned that this passage about the five rabbis who talked through the night probably recalls Bar Kokhba's rebellion against Rome in 132 C.E. The explanation made sense: at such a conspiratorial gathering, "Egypt" would have suggested "Rome," and the story of the liberation would have served as a spring for regenerating the passion for freedom. To me, though, at least in those days, the image of Jews fighting for their national liberation was probably less compelling than the image of Jews *arguing* over their national liberation.

Throughout my teens and far beyond, I took the discussion of life to be its essential part. I even located in literature the ideal modern seder: in one of his dramatic narratives, Edmund Wilson, then my ideal intellectual, imagines the Prophet Elijah

* For the most part I will be quoting from the translation by Jacob Sloan in *The Passover Haggadah*, edited by Nahum N. Glatzer (Schocken Books).

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turning up at a seder of Jewish scholars and professionals on the Upper West Side of Manhattan. He is accompanied by the Messiah, who has come to redeem the world. But the New York Jews know better. The Hebraist among them is appalled by Elijah's faulty pronunciation; the psychoanalyst tries to figure out the nature of the Messiah's delusion; the Marxist trips him up on dialectics; the rabbi-turned-editor tries to square the pronouncements of the visitors with those of Maimonides, Saadia Gaon, and other sources. Wearied by this brief exposure to those he has come to redeem, the Messiah decides to postpone his advent. The story is very witty, but what really appealed to me about it was the verve of the talkers. Even at the risk of becoming a butt of Wilson's satire, I would have wanted to be a member of that party.

Mine was not the only intellectual passion in the family. My older brother Benjamin, who sat beside our father near the head of the table, the very embodiment of the "wise son," had been encouraged throughout childhood and early teens to develop all his manifold talents, including the talent (inherited from my mother) for music. After his first year in college he decided to study textiles. It was never clear to me nor, I believe, to him whether he did this because he wanted to be useful to the state of Israel, where he planned to settle, or because he wanted to be useful to his father in Canada, where he did settle. In either event he seems to have regarded business as a form of servitude, from which he sought occasional release in music—every kind of music except opera.

Perhaps I should not be fully trusted in this account of my older brother, because I have not yet made my peace with him for hastening the end of his life at the age of forty-three and would drag him from the grave by his grassy hair if I could. Apart from my parents, he was the most important influence on my life, as he was on our Passover. For years he introduced new commentaries on various passages of the Haggadah; then he began teaching us new melodies, some for passages we had never sung before, others to replace melodies we habitually used. He taught us Sephardic melodies which were as exotic as saffron and cardamon—this was before the first recordings of Ladino songs appeared—and sometimes the melodies were so complicated it took a few years before we could get them right.

The melodies Ben taught us came to constitute a kind of Passion in his memory. I risk this image though it would have annoyed him. The great oratories, music sung to sacred text, were to him the heights of glory. He would listen to the St. John and St. Matthew Passions in the semi-dark, in votive awe. Music being his gateway to ecstasy, Ben must have felt at least a twinge of envy for those who could actually worship God by way of J.S. Bach. Theirs was the grandeur—a touch of which he seemed determined to bring to our own domestic annual rite of the seder. And so our singing grew ever more exalted, our voices more full, and Ben remained present in the chorale that he crafted, directing traffic.

One last word about music. My brother died in the autumn. When, years later, his eldest son Joshua decided to follow, he took his life in the spring. We had barely risen from the *shiva* for Josh when we had to sit down to the seder. Everyone knew what had to be done: the imperatives of celebration, life goes on, for the sake of the children. . . . We prepared the seder as always, gathered as always, began to read through the Haggadah, determined to hold firm. But this was not enough for our children, Josh's siblings and cousins. There are certain songs in the seder that consist of verse and refrain, *many* verses and refrains. We generally sing the first three or four, quickly recite the rest, then conclude with the final two. This time the young generation rebelled, insisting on every last word of every last verse of every last song. As they realized what they were doing, two of their number slipped out of the room to return with sets of hand drums we keep in the house, transforming the song into a tribal chant. Since then, our seder has always included a reenactment of this musical battle between the young zealots and the stodgy formalists, in honor of Josh whose greatest pleasure was also music. Despair was our Egypt. Our children followed the example of their grandparents in breaking free of it, to the accompaniment of timbrels.

Just see how this account of mine threatens to narrow into family lore, how easily a family becomes absorbed in its own high drama rather than the one that the Haggadah invites us to join. I say "threatens" because, however much we are expected to celebrate as a family, we are also warned against illusions of self-sufficiency, lest we upset the balance that Passover celebrates. Before the younger child asks the Four Questions, the host says the following:

> This is the bread of poverty which our forefathers ate in the land of Egypt. Let all who are hungry enter and eat; let all who are needy come to our Passover feast. This year we are here; next year may we be in the Land of Israel. This year we are slaves; next year may we be free men.

Touchstone of Jewish morality, this passage translates freedom into responsibility at the very moment we taste it. The wafer, not the body of Christ but the bread of affliction—an equally ambiguous symbol—comes complete with national instructions. Liberation, whatever else it may mean, requires that you feed the hungry and house the needy. The connection between celebration and obligation is bred in the bone.

At the seder all symbols are made flesh. The matzah enters the digestive system, the stranger

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comes to sit among us—nowadays more often an assimilated or Gentile acquaintance than a dust-worn traveler. Sholem Aleichem tells a story about an exotic Passover guest who makes off not only with the household silver and jewelry but with the maid as well. My friends used to invite new immigrants from Russia who chain-smoked their way through Haggadah and food. A rabbinical student once commandeered our table for his first pulpit. It seems, then, that we are not meant to equate freedom with comfort. Even the presence of family all around us, family being both the chief reward and the warrant of freedom, can be either a constraining or a liberating force. At the Passover table, at any rate, the family is enjoined, significantly, not to feed on itself but to open its door—with due respect for the dangers involved.

Edmund Wilson describes the seder as "the combination of a family party like Christmas dinner with a ritual of resurrection that resembles an Easter Mass." The appropriateness of the analogies aside, the characterization omits the main feature of Passover, which also happens to be the one that so discomfits the intellectuals around Wilson's imaginary table—namely, the celebration of Jewish national freedom:

> This year we are here; next year may we be in the Land of Israel. This year we are slaves; next year may we be free men.

It has driven many modern Jews wild, this story of national liberation. There was Marx unveiling the great international future, and were they then supposed to crawl back into their tribal tents? Squirming, they would read God's promise to strike down the enemies of their people: ". . . for in every generation they stand up to destroy us, and the Holy One, blessed be He, saves us from their hand." Here was the sticking point! They may not have minded all that talk about the "bread of affliction"; they might bask in the injunction to be compassionate, to let "all who are needy come to our Passover feast"; and as for the core notions of liberation and the struggle to be free, were these not the very stuff of class revolution, from the Bastille to the Winter Palace? But a struggle against enemies of the *Jews* was another matter. When the Haggadah begins robustly to recount how the liberation from Pharaoh had to be achieved, through plagues of blood, frogs, lice, beasts, blight, boils, hail, locusts, darkness, and the slaying of the first-born of all the Egyptians; when, adding insult to injury, it tells how the ancient rabbis, unsatisfied with ten plagues, multiplied them into fifty, two hundred, three hundred—then would these sons and daughters of the modern age run from the table in disgust.

Until recently, Jews used to flick a drop of wine from their cups as they pronounced each of the plagues, as if drawing the blood of battle. Under the influence of liberal thought, this old custom was reinterpreted in the 19th century by the great modern Orthodox rabbi, Samson Raphael Hirsch, to mean that we were thus signifying our sympathy for the misfortune visited upon the Egyptians, and in that measure tempering our joy at our own liberation. And why not? Liberal interpreters still point with delight to the midrash in which God scolds his angels for singing as the Red Sea waters engulf the hapless Egyptians: "What! Shall you sing while my children are drowning in the sea?"

In retrospect, however, it is easy to see that in attempting to upgrade morality, the liberal interpreters were trying to lighten their own moral load. Turning the drop of wine into an expression of compassion is really a form of self-pity, as the reluctant warrior ostentatiously displays his conscience and, under the guise of pitying his enemies, subtly renounces his own wish for victory. Or, if not the wish for it, then the determination to attain it, which requires assuming responsibility for the blood it may cost. Thus have many Jews determined to become tender as a people, without considering that the tender part is the easiest to chew.

The uprising in the Warsaw Ghetto, which began on the first night of Passover in 1943, after most of the Jews had already been killed, should have stiffened the national resolve of all who came after. In the only formal addition my family ever made to the seder, we included a commemoration of that event, initially one of our own devising, then the one circulated by the World Jewish Congress whose preposterously archaic style gradually acquired the power to move us:

> On this night of the seder we remember with reverence and love the six millions of our people of the European exile who perished at the hands of a tyrant more wicked than the Pharaoh who enslaved our fathers in Egypt. Come, said he to his minions, let us cut them off from being a people, that the name of Israel may be remembered no more. And they slew the blameless and pure, men and women and little ones, with vapors of poison and burned them with fire. But we abstain from dwelling on the deeds of the evil ones lest we defame the image of God in which man was created. . . .

Followed by the singing of *ani maamin*—"I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, and though he tarry, nonetheless do I believe"—this part of the seder was raw and disturbing to me. Tumbling images of burning buildings and people ablaze that I had seen or imagined came to rest always on the photographic image of two women with their hands in the air, surrounded by the Germans who would in a moment execute them. These women had been resistance fighters, and we were marking the bravery of their resistance; but it was the Germans who were walking triumphantly through the sea, and

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it was a sea of Jewish cadavers. Perhaps there had been people in the ghettos and concentration camps who believed with perfect faith in the coming of the Messiah, but he had tarried. In the meantime, we were willy-nilly celebrating the liberation of Europe from the Jews.

Can one really fault those Jews who refuse to yoke themselves to the national fate? Now that our children have taken over the job of reciting the texts commemorating the ghetto martyrs, I sometimes wonder what we are doing to them. What have we already done? In France last year I met a lapsed Jew whose grandmother had begged him to have his first child baptized: "*Ça suffit!*" She had had enough, this woman who had spent the war hiding in barns and cellars. Similarly with Jews who convert to other faiths, especially the ones that promise to "transcend" national limitations. They too want to escape a surfeit of grief.

Our ancestors, those who were neither killed nor cowed, saved themselves through a blast of rage. Today we follow their example, verbally. The natural place to commemorate the European massacre occurs right before the *shfoykh khamoskho*:

Pour out Thy wrath upon the nations that
know Thee not,
And upon the kingdoms that call not upon
Thy name.
For they have devoured Jacob,
And laid waste his habitation.
Pour out Thine indignation upon them,
And let the fierceness of Thine anger overtake
them.
Thou wilt pursue them in anger, and destroy
them
From under the heavens of the Lord!

The custom of reciting these verses, carefully stitched together from Psalms 79:6–7, 69:25, and Lamentations 3:66, originated after the Crusades of the 11th and 12th centuries when Christian Europe made the first of its several attempts to cleanse itself of Jews, and when the landscape of corpses, men and women and little ones, must have looked much the same as it would in 1945. Before emitting their eloquent howl, Jews have customarily flung open the doors of their houses. One does not know which to admire the more, the courage it has taken in some places and times to tell the Gentiles, *We will not cringe before you*, or the courage to keep invoking, in this connection, the name of God.

Of course, no sooner has the pain of catastrophe begun to wear off than some Jews have come to feel embarrassed by this outburst; in our time the Haggadah of the Reform movement does not include the passage at all. But as it happens we are well placed historically to appreciate the charged fury of our medieval forefathers. They could not have continued to trust in God unless they also believed in His justice. Certainly, they could not have celebrated their ancient liberation as a people without some cry for retribution in the present. My brother-in-law can cite relevant psychoanalytic writings testifying to the sources of depression in stifled anger. For myself, I need that outburst and the rush of cold air through the open door as much as I once needed my mother's love and my father's approval. I want those who hunt the Jews to be hunted down themselves, wiped from under the heavens of the Lord. I feel ashamed not at the demand for retribution, but at how little Jews have done to bring their destroyers to trial.

Our local rabbi once said that if Jews did not ask God—at the top of their lungs—to pour out His wrath on their enemies, they could not properly sing His praises in the Hallelujahs that follow. When I was younger this second, post-meal half of the seder, composed of psalms and songs of gratitude, seemed frivolous compared with the high history we had recalled earlier in the evening. Perhaps because we were by then too well fed to do much *gribbling*—my mother's term for our (pointless) analyses of text—or perhaps because we were following the established rhythm of the generations, we did little but sing and joke, as the Haggadah obviously intended. This was the time for satisfaction, which I used to equate with triviality.

But nowadays, when the meal is over and we have reassembled around the rumpled table, the children beginning to droop, the young people hauled back from ping-pong or the hockey playoff that in Canada perennially competes with the seder, the men with their jackets off, the women unburdened of family problems, I feel the unparalleled joy of being a Jew. The reenactment of the Exodus, which for me begins weeks earlier when I clean out the first section of cupboard and carry in my first Passover supplies, has brought us through all the stages of affliction and triumph to these hours of grace. The journey undertaken at the behest of God cannot be realized without gratitude to Him.

Since early adolescence my strongest contact with God has been through the traditions of the Jews who first recognized Him and received His word. That is to say, my contact has been indirect, which for me is sufficient. But the night of the seder differs from all other nights of the year; it requires my participation.

How can I repay unto the Lord
All His bountiful dealings toward me?
I will lift up the cup of salvation
And call upon the name of the Lord.

Our homage is as rich as we can make it, combining the hymns of many centuries composed in many parts of the globe. There have accrued to the seder playful songs, historical allegories, a mystically layered hymn, "And so it came to pass in the middle of the night," that begins with the frightening nocturnal break for freedom. In sum,

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the liturgy proclaims, "The breath of every living thing shall bless thy name, O Lord."

It is my younger brother who undertakes to recite this particularly glorious hymn in a single swooping breath, just as Father used to do. Father may have done it with a touch of irony, to show that he was not altogether comfortable with the language of sanctification. But so much for irony: my younger brother, who devotes his life to teaching and forging Jewish continuities, has translated the irony back into homage for both his earthly father and the One in heaven.

The story of the Exodus concludes when the Jews have achieved their freedom in the land of Israel.

Concluded is the Passover Seder,
According to its law and custom.
As we have lived to celebrate it
So may we live to celebrate it again.
Pure One, who dwells in His habitation
Redress the countless congregation.
Speedily lead the offshoots of thy stock
Redeemed, to Zion in joyous song.
NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM!

At this point my tongue begins to fail me. I cannot explain, least of all to anyone who may require explanation, the joy of Jerusalem in our lives. Many of us around the table have lived in Israel, plan to live in Israel, want to live in Israel, or believe they ought to live in Israel, though we could not separate out these impulses or even account for all of them.

When our daughter left to spend a year at the Hebrew University she said, "I'm afraid I'm going to like it there." One of our sons recently wrote from Jerusalem that the city felt like a book he had begun five or six times but had never read through to the end. Our niece stopped us this year as we were reading the passage, "And he [Jacob] went down into Egypt . . . and sojourned there." The Haggadah interprets this to mean that Jacob did not go down to Egypt to settle, but only for a temporary visit. Nothing has changed, she said with a rueful smile, no one ever intends to settle outside the land of Israel, we just sojourn elsewhere—for hundreds of years at a time.

I know there are Gentiles who suspect and modern Jews who fear that this longing for the East makes Jews less trustworthy citizens of their adopted countries and native lands. Yet even in Israel, Jews recite the verse, "Next year in Jerusalem rebuilt." They are expected to accomplish the trick of enjoying their national freedom while remembering that they—that we—are not yet fully redeemed.

After the Exodus from Egypt it took Moses forty years to turn a slave people into a nation sufficiently disciplined and worthy to reenter its land. Forty years used to seem a preposterously long time, but now I doubt whether in the forty years since the Jews of modernity reclaimed their homeland, they have even yet begun to shed the bonds of slavery. There are still so many who prefer victimization to the onerous tasks of governance. And this time they are without a prophetic leader. Moses, the hero, is not even mentioned in the Haggadah story, as if in warning that once the Jews had the law in their hands and had been pointed in the direction of the promised land, they would have to manage themselves as a people, and venture forth together and alone.

This past year there were changes at our seder. Some of our grown children were elsewhere, at the tables of hospitable strangers or friends, while we again were hosting small children and an infant, my parents' first great-grandchild. Suddenly, the rhythm of adult discussion and song was punctured by fresh excitement. As in years past, children controlled the main action: the theft of the *afikoman*, the matzah that is required to end the meal, and its concealment with breathless squeals somewhere in the house. My husband could be counted on to conduct a search sufficiently vigorous to convince the children of his sincerity, and sufficiently careful to avoid accidental discovery of the purloined dessert. He then "redeemed" the stolen treasure with a promise of toys, invoking for anyone paying sufficiently close attention yet another echo of the theme of the evening.

Which may also be why, the following night, we rose at the conclusion of the second seder in my sister's home to sing *Hatikvah*—"Hope"—the Jewish national anthem. All evening long we had been talking about the nonstop bombardment of Lebanon at the hands of the Syrians. An Armenian friend had been vainly trying to contact his family in Beirut. That morning, our daily newspaper had reconfirmed, through its silence about what was going on in Lebanon, that an Arab is of human interest only if he is threatened by a Jew. As for us, we thought, and as for our kinsmen in the Holy Land, there but for the grace of the Israel Defense Force go we. The more we talked about the political war against Israel and the failing spirits of the Jews, the more discouraged we grew. We tried to walk the tightrope of the Haggadah between festivity and grit, but when we arrived at the end we had still not managed to fight off our dumb dejection. Let's sing *Hatikvah*, someone said, and we all got to our feet. Standing erect we found it easier to believe that we were now and would forever remain a sovereign people.

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Does the Piano Have a Future?

Samuel Lipman

I AM NOW fifty-five years old. I have been playing the piano for the last fifty-two years, and I suppose that in some way I shall continue to play it for as long as—or perhaps even for a bit longer than—my fingers are able to move. *My* intention, at least, is clear; what is murky is how long the piano will be around.

The present-day piano is the successor to the aristocratic harpsichord, but unlike its elegant ancestor its strings are struck rather than plucked. It is a ponderous agglomeration of wood, metal, and cloth; its more than two hundred strings are hit with considerable force by compacted felt hammers, and its cunningly designed sounding board enables the struck strings, and their sympathetic neighbors, to project their rich vibrations into grand public spaces. In varying designs—long (a "grand"), high (an "upright"), or short and low (a "console" or "spinet")—the piano is played by applying the fingers to a keyboard containing, in its final, fully-developed form, eighty-eight keys. At least ten of these keys may be struck by the pianist at any one time; with the help of a sustaining pedal, actuated by the right foot, all the notes may be made to go on sounding long after the initial impact of hammers upon strings.

Almost all the greatest composers of the past two centuries have written for the piano; in the case of several, notably Beethoven, Schubert, Schumann, Liszt, Brahms, and Debussy, they entrusted to it some of their most profound—not to say attractive—thoughts. Equally importantly, the piano throughout its history has arrogated to itself music written before its own modern development, including that of Bach, originally composed for the thin-sounding harpsichord, the whispering clavichord, and the majestic, albeit unwieldy, organ. Haydn and Mozart, too, both of whom wrote marvelous music for the fortepiano, a transitional instrument between the harpsichord and the modern piano, were quickly gathered up to feed the new instrument's imperial triumph.

Great and even mythic careers have been made playing the modern piano. Past celebrities, beginning on the highest level with the composer Liszt and the hardly less popular Rachmaninoff, have included Anton Rubinstein, Josef Hofmann, and Ignace Jan Paderewski. Closer to today we have witnessed the meteoric careers of Arthur Rubinstein, Artur Schnabel, and Vladimir Horowitz, and still more recently, the brief access of Van Cliburn, rocketed to fame in 1958 on the imprimatur of Nikita Khrushchev.

The piano could hardly have become so popular had the music written for it not occupied a position at the top of European culture, and had that music not been immediately recognized as among the highest achievements of world civilization. But at the same time the piano has always served as more than a medium of musical greatness. Throughout the 19th century, it was the indispensable item of middle-class home furniture, its possession a sure sign on the one hand that art was no longer the birthright of an increasingly redundant and superannuated aristocracy, and on the other that a household prosperous enough to own a piano had permanently escaped the coils of the peasantry and the working class.

Much more can be said, of course, about the piano's appeal. To take only one example: for several generations of upwardly mobile Jews in Western and Eastern Europe and later in America, the piano provided a wholesome vehicle for indulging the cultural aspirations kindled in them by the Enlightenment. Always concerned first with the education of their children, Jewish parents soon noticed that more was at stake in playing the piano than simple—in its working-out, hardly so simple—acculturation, social progress, or, on a higher level, what the Germans called *Bildung* (the formation of character and mind through the acquisition of civilized learning). In fact, given the rage everywhere for classical music, those Jewish children who showed remarkable talent were quickly able to become successful figures of European and even world importance.

TO UNDERSTAND what the piano has been in the past and is today, and what its future might hold, we must examine four areas: the instrument, its public, its players, and its music. Between them, two books published in the past year go much of the way toward mapping this territory.

The first, *The Piano in America, 1890–1940*, by the business historian Craig H. Roell,* is an example of an emergent trend in the social sciences toward descriptions of the tangled relationship between culture and commerce. Despite the title, it is not Roell's purpose to describe the different pianos made

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in America; his interest is clearly not in manufacture but in marketing, and his book offers a detailed account of the way piano-makers, during the heyday of the American industry, attempted to sell their products in an environment of rapid and sweeping changes in consumer tastes and behavior. The second book, *The Art of the Piano*, by the music historian and broadcaster (and sometime pianist) David Dubal,* is a more traditional *omnium gatherum* directed at present and prospective devotees; it consists of brief sketches of well-known pianists yesterday and today and the repertory they have played, together with lists of the most important recordings (in Dubal's opinion) of this repertory available since 1949 on LP, and now on compact discs.

First, then, the history. The tale Roell tells begins late in the 19th century, when the piano was already indispensable to serious music and well on the way to becoming a fixture in comfortable homes everywhere. It ends (in 1940) with the American piano industry engaged in a determined effort to sell an expensive object that no one really needed, but that everyone, it was hoped, could be made to desire.

There is little doubt that, historically, the piano was uniquely suited to be such an object of desire. As Roell sees the matter, the piano, requiring study and practice to play, could easily be regarded as an exemplar of the Victorian ethic of work. Because it could be learned and played in the home, it could become a means whereby women, trained in the gentle art of music, might civilize their always potentially barbarous men. And because music was itself elevating, it could lead everyone who came under its sway toward what has lately been called a "kinder, gentler" world.

Unfortunately, there was a serpent concealed in the conception of Eden harbored by piano-makers, and by their customers. That serpent, to mix metaphors, sailed under the old, familiar flag of "something for nothing." Though the piano did indeed require great effort to play decently—and Roell is nothing if not candid on this score, bestowing many derogatory comments, only some of them deserved, on old-time lady piano teachers—and thus amply justified its place in the Victorian hierarchy of values, all the suffering one underwent did not guarantee a reward. Then, as now, great numbers studied the piano, many practiced it, but few actually learned to play it.

And so, in the early years of the present century, the player piano was born. By means of perforated paper rolls containing the punched-in records of great, or at least efficient, executants' performances, this devilish triumph of mechanization enabled a specially designed home piano to burst forth with a stunningly rapid clatter of sounds. Somewhat in the fashion of cake mixes that allow the person opening the package to exercise a creative function by adding an egg, the player pianos made provision for a person sitting at the keyboard to vary the monster machine's speed, dynamic level, and pedaling.

Not only did such an appeal to enlightened sloth prove commercially attractive, it was reformist as well: in the best democratic fashion, the player piano enabled everyone, not just the talented and the hard-working but the untalented and the lazy, to share in the satisfactions of making music, even of making great music. Not that one should overrate the quality of the music rendered by player pianos: in fact, their vogue coincided with the ragtime craze in American popular music, and as Roell quite correctly points out, authentic ragtime is very difficult to play. I can remember my own attempts, undertaken in order to impress the fairer sex, to master the cross-rhythms, accuracy in jumping around the keyboard, and physical endurance necessary for a proper ragtime performance. For the player piano, with its ability to employ all the keys at once, ragtime was duck soup.

For a time player pianos were big business. By 1919, out of some 350,000 pianos sold in the United States, fully 53 percent were player pianos; by 1923, the figure had risen to 56 percent. Ironically, however, all this was soon to change: the market for passive music-making so prosperously excited by the player piano would come to be filled not by a musical instrument but by that child of electricity, the radio. Not only was performed music, of whatever kind, soon to be accessible without any effort on the part of the erstwhile amateur producer, now consumer; best of all, it was to be available without any cost save the initial, relatively low, price of the radio and the trifling amount of electricity required to operate it.

The radio arrived in the mid-1920's. By 1929—before the onset of the Great Depression—the piano business was irremediably marked by the hostile winds of change. Despite the widespread popularity of music, and even of serious music; despite the growth of music education in the schools; despite a more musically aware population than America had ever before known, the piano industry was now bankrupt.

At first the Depression, with its drying-up of economic activity and massive unemployment, seemed only to complete the work of electrically-assisted mass culture in destroying the viability of piano manufacturing. Many firms failed, and many were forced into combinations that overnight obliterated decades of hard-earned distinctions among competing trademarks and makers. Even the august firm of Steinway & Sons, so beloved by great artists that it could justifiably advertise its product as "The Instrument of the Immortals," was forced to cease building pianos from 1931 to 1933.

But what the Depression took away the Depression was also to give back, if in a different form. For amid the economic dislocations that followed the 1929 crash there now arose the possibility of a return to a view of music as uplifting, as a noble human activity that contributed to the maintenance of traditional values.

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* Summit Books, 476 pp., $40.00.

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As Roell puts it, with only a hint of condescension:

> . . . the hard times brought a revival of Victorian values and provoked a new interest in the importance of home and family life. Movies and much of the literature glorified traditional American values, seeking to establish a sense of security, an identity with a somewhat mythical age of cooperation, justice, and moral economics. Iron deer reappeared on lawns, old-style wallpaper became popular, the waltz replaced the Charleston, and the flapper was urged home again.

Led by Steinway and Baldwin, then as now the only domestic competitors for the quality piano market, manufacturers were quick to appeal to the new turn of the public mind. In doing so they were only behaving naturally, for the piano industry, and especially its leaders, had always been more comfortable representing their product as a facilitator of art and uplift than as a medium of easy entertainment. Roell is generous in recognizing their high interests:

> [They] were patrons of culture as well as business. They cultivated sales, but concurrently sought to uplift society through their product and its characteristic bond with art. In so doing, they encouraged their society's appreciation of music. And as that society become more consumption-oriented, they fought to regenerate the importance of making music and of self-expression. In this, because the consumer culture can never be wholly absorbing, they were successful.

The Piano in America 1890-1940 closes on an ambivalent note: the piano industry had survived, in a healthy but reduced state, by insisting at one and the same time on the piano as art and as a "symbol of a past age" (in Roell's inevitably dismissive phrase). During World War II—to go for a moment beyond Roell's terminal date—the industry was quickly converted to war production, and it was not until 1946 that a flood of new pianos again began reaching American consumers. As for the more recent story of the piano business, including an account of the takeover in the past two decades of the American market by pianos made in the Far East, this remains to be written; Roell seems a worthy and likely candidate for the task.

There is, however, one curious and significant lacuna in his excellent effort. Roell writes much about pianos, their makers, their buyers, and the terms on which the public and the manufacturers met. But though he discusses the way piano-makers appealed to art in marketing their wares, he has very little to say about the art that underlay the appeal, and that must have been so important both to sellers and buyers. That art, of course, was the great music written expressly for the piano, and performable only on it, over a period extending approximately from the beginning of the 19th century to the time of World War I.

In Roell's index there is but a single page reference to Beethoven, and the text in that instance offers merely a glancing account of Beethoven's preference in piano-makers. There is no mention at all of Chopin, the quintessential composer of piano music playable in the home to the supreme gratification of amateur performers and casual listeners alike. Famous pianists are mentioned on occasion, but always as entertainers rather than as the communicators of high art. Roell displays a welcome willingness to treat *recherché* entities like Victorian values and cultural uplift as real and consequential determinants of human behavior; despite this, he seems sadly unable to come to terms with the piano not only as an instrument which, when well played, astounded and mesmerized with its brilliance—though it surely did that—but as an instrument for which great composers were writing great music.

David Dubal's *The Art of the Piano* hardly suffers from a lack of talk about art. As the profiles of pianists pile up in this book, all in alphabetical order, and composers follow suit, one begins to appreciate just how massive an artistic effort has been devoted to the piano over its history. Inevitably, Dubal retraces much of the same ground covered by the former New York *Times* music critic Harold C. Schonberg in his *The Great Pianists* (1963, widely available in an updated version in paperback); but unlike his predecessor, Dubal eschews the vulgar, albeit often telling, anecdote in favor of the sober recounting of biographical fact.

In listing pianists, Dubal is satisfactorily inclusive; the omissions I found were few, and with the possible exception of the Spaniard Eduardo del Pueyo, none seems in any way central. As might be expected, more space is given to the famous than to the little-known. If we take the number of words as indicative of Dubal's musical esteem, the clear winner is Vladimir Horowitz, at eight-plus pages; by contrast, Arthur Rubinstein, Horowitz's only competitor for the post-1945 celebrity title, receives a scant three pages. Fittingly, the back jacket of *The Art of the Piano* is adorned with an extravagant blurb by Horowitz: "It must be read by everyone who loves the instrument."

On occasion, Dubal can be harsh in his comments. Thus, of the flamboyant Earl Wild, a specialist in virtuoso (and for many, including me, meretricious) salon transcriptions, he remarks:

> He is lavish in his use of rubato. A witty man, he once told me that his performance of the Chopin Ballade in G minor one evening had had enough rubato to last for two years. (I remember thinking how ghastly the performance had been.)

Dubal is hard, too, on the hyperserious Czech specialist Alfred Brendel, whom he finds (despite commendable artistic seriousness) often dry, lacking in suggestiveness, and without real technical flexibility. He is even hard on Josef Hofmann, beyond reproach to many piano lovers, whom he accuses of frequently playing in order

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to shock the audience rather than to illuminate the music; he is also tough (in my opinion correctly so) on Hofmann's pupil Jorge Bolet, whose playing—especially on records—he describes in such terms as tired, earthbound, humdrum. By contrast, he seems very kind to the many young pianists about whom he writes briefly, stressing their achievements and minimizing their flaws.

Yet even taking into account his reservations, it is difficult to avoid the impression that Dubal is a fan writing for other fans. He concentrates on saying good and frequently extravagant things about the scores of pianists he has heard in concert and on record, and he has equally good things to say about the scores of earlier artists about whom he has only read. In addition to being a great fan of pianists, Duval is a great fan of piano music. The almost two hundred pages he devotes to a discussion of the important works of the repertory are universally enthusiastic; furthermore, in listing recommended recordings—often as many as ten—of each work or group of works, Dubal declines to rank competing versions but is content to list them alphabetically.*

WHAT seems finally so curious about Dubal's approach is just this unwillingness to take sides. Reading his book, one is fully aware that he likes the good pianists and dislikes the bad; more than that, one is aware that he is mightily impressed by individualistic playing, whether oriented toward technical display or toward musical expression. It is also plain that Dubal wants to avoid comparing the work of today's pianists with the work of past masters. But what is so difficult to tell is just what *kind* of playing he really prefers.

There are, after all, great differences among pianists, expressed both in the individual and characteristic features of their art and in the nature of their appeal to sophisticated and unsophisticated listeners alike. Pianists are young, middle-aged, or old, tense or relaxed, brilliant or refined, direct or subtle, and (dare it be said?) male or female. Even excellent pianists possess widely varying amounts of technical equipment and musical knowledge; even successful and famous pianists exhibit widely varying levels of mastery. And beyond all these relatively easily identifiable characteristics, each artist displays, and displays the more on closer acquaintance, a world of subtle differences, expressed through dynamics, tone, phrasing, rhythm, and pulse, of individual style, personality, and communicated emotion. Put another way, the differences in the F minor Sonata opus 57 (the "Appassionata") of Beethoven as played by Rubinstein, Schnabel, or Horowitz (to choose three incontestably great artists each of whom recorded the work in the past) are so great that, excellent though each may be, a sophisticated listener is all but compelled to choose among them.

Then, too, there are the various nationalities of pianists—German, Russian, French, Spanish, English, American. Despite the endless variations within each nationality, it can be said that each country as a whole has produced a school of playing. Moreover, each national school has a national specialty, invariably made up of national composers, and these groups of composers also make up schools of composition, each widely different from the next, and instantly recognizable. In the close relationship between national composition styles and national playing styles—between, for example, Germanic pianists and Beethoven and Schubert, or between Polish pianists and Chopin, or between Russian pianists and Rachmaninoff, or between French pianists and Debussy and Ravel, or between American pianists and Gershwin and Samuel Barber—lies perhaps the best chance that a given composer's intentions will be realized (though even the best such rendering is unlikely to be equally beloved by all).

IT IS a remarkable characteristic of musical life today that we no longer feel comfortable making clear statements of our own preferences in individual artists, or in conflicting national schools. This attitude is new. It used to be that every lover of the piano had his favorites. When I was growing up in the 1940's the fur always flew when the merits of competing artists were being discussed by knowledgeable and experienced concertgoers. Today, discussing his selection of repertory, David Dubal can write:

> After each composition, I have listed various recordings which represent the widest diversity of interpretation. If, for example, listeners were to hear each of my selections for the Brahms Second Piano Concerto, they would form through such "comparative listening" a great knowledge of the work's potential and interpretive possibilities. From such listening one becomes open-minded, and always curious as to the next performance.

The end result is that Dubal has succeeded in writing a book not of criticism but of appreciation. It can be argued that these days, appreciation is just what we need. Even if this were so, however, it is impossible to ignore the loss to living art implicit in the sacrifice of hard judgment to the cause of an unbounded admiration.

DUBAL'S good feelings are especially evident in a passage summarizing his attitude toward the present and the future:

> One thing is certain: the piano and piano playing are here to stay. More countries produce pianos than ever before—Korea, Brazil, Switzerland, Czechoslovakia, China, Thailand, Australia, and many others—while Japan has become the world's largest piano producer. The Orient, in its obsession with things Western, has been captivated by the

* Dubal seems to me to have erred in excluding from his recommended lists many classic recordings made by great artists on 78-rpm discs, and transferred excellently to LP in Europe. Among the most important of these are performances from the 1930's by the great French pianist Alfred Cortot of works by César Franck and Maurice Ravel—in particular the Franck Prelude, Chorale, and Fugue and the Ravel Concerto for the Left Hand.

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instrument. Asian pianists are filling conservatories and winning competitions. The future of the instrument and its literature are becoming international. Had Beethoven or Liszt ever thought of a Japanese or a Korean pianist?

This forthright statement hardly specifies just what music all the new pianists are to play. David Dubal's book is full of the names of great pianists who wrote great music and themselves played it supremely well: the line connecting Beethoven, Chopin, Liszt, and Brahms to Debussy and Rachmaninoff is central to the development of playing no less than to that of composition. But this happy condition no longer obtains, for quite without exception today's best pianists do not compose. Are there, then, non-pianists who are writing great piano music today?

Dubal's answer to this vexing question is, once again, forthright:

> [A]lthough many think that composers no longer love the piano as they once did, the piano literature of the 20th century gives abundant proof to the contrary. Indeed, one of the great challenges for the contemporary pianist will be to reveal the wealth of the 20th century's piano literature to audiences worldwide.

It should hardly be necessary to remind ourselves that the 20th century is now nine-tenths over; very few people, musicians or otherwise, who were born in its early years are still with us today. Though Debussy wrote his great piano music in this century, and though in his day he must have seemed modern indeed, he surely belongs not to our time but to the increasingly far-distant world of pre-1914 Europe. Ravel wrote marvelous music for the piano into the 1930's—but his compositional style was largely formed already by the turn of the century. The still very modern-sounding Béla Bartók was dead by 1945, almost a half-century ago; in fact Bartók's Third Concerto, almost finished at his death, is the last work for piano and orchestra to enter the international repertory. Significantly, Prokofiev's last piano sonatas, though they are still used to fill the "contemporary" niche on recital programs, were all in place by 1947, just two years after the Bartók Third Concerto.

THUS, most of what we today call modern music is in fact old music. If we are to be honest in using the category of contemporary music, it seems clear that it should apply to *new* music, music that is being written now rather than that which comes out of a (properly) hallowed past. And just where, one must ask, is this marvelous new music? Wherever it is to be found, one thing is certain: there is precious little of it mentioned in David Dubal's book.

Scattered among his profiles of the famous there are indeed several composers whose works are still unassimilated into the musical vocabulary either of pianists or of audiences. Yet all of them, living or dead, were born more than six decades ago. Among them are Arnold Schoenberg (1874-1951), Anton Webern (1883-1945), Roger Sessions (1896-1985), Luigi Dallapiccola (1904-1975), Olivier Messiaen (b. 1908), Elliott Carter (b. 1908), Luciano Berio (b. 1925), Pierre Boulez (b. 1925), Karlheinz Stockhausen (b. 1928), and George Crumb (b. 1929). Several of these composers have written highly interesting works for the piano, yet not one of them shows the slightest sign of entering the standard piano repertory—the music through which a great piano career is made.

Dubal does add a few pages describing briefly a category of music he deems "worth examination and study . . . [by] composers of special quality who have explored the piano with high ideals and particularly understand the instrument's resources." In this category he lists 106 composers, fully 54 of whom were born before 1900 and another 33 between 1900 and 1920. The remaining 19, the "now generation," there is no point enumerating. They write in styles ranging from the academic to the avant-garde. I am sorry Dubal left out, in his discussion of the works of older composers, the massive Sonata (1983) by the American composer Hugo Weisgall (b. 1912), a work I have played several times and have always found moving and rewarding.

As for the younger composers Dubal mentions, my own experience of many of them gives me little hope that their music will ever be more than objects of curiosity, programmed by few pianists and heard only by that exiguous public of colleagues who make up the serious contemporary-music audience today. Sadly, but also tellingly, it is necessary to note that though Dubal places great weight on the present and future of the piano in the Orient, he does not discuss the music of a single Asian composer.

IT IS now time to return to the question with which I began: whither the piano?

There are three parts to any answer to this question. The first part must address itself to the current level of piano playing. Is it sufficiently high to communicate the great works of the past to new, and lamentably untrained, audiences? The second part must consider whether a living tradition of performance can exist without new compositions on which to build. And the last part must look to the nature of a cultural enterprise tied as this one is to the artistic, intellectual, and social values of the past. Can such an enterprise survive in a world increasingly given to defining itself not by its continuity with the past, but by its breaking with, and destruction of, that past?

As to the first part, the present level of performance, I myself have grave doubts. Today's pianists, whether from the Orient or from the Occident, play accurately but no more than accurately; as compared with artists of even the fairly recent past, they lack a wide knowledge of the literature, technical flair, unforced projection of tone, the ability to communicate the differences among composers' styles, and, above all, emotional power. The result of these shortcomings is a gap between the content of the

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music being played and the audiences' perception of that content. In the piano literature perhaps more than in any other area of serious music (save opera), what is being heard by the musical public today is only a simulacrum, not the reality, of incontestable masterworks.

As to the second part: because of the absence of new piano compositions that go via the ears and minds of listeners to their hearts, performers have been robbed of their best approach to an audience: the communication of an art arising directly out of the performers' immediate life experience rather than out of imitation, no matter how accomplished, of predecessors. Such imitation is inevitably an act of recreation rather than of creation, and it makes of today's pianists merely ingenious antiquarians and painstaking curators; the current stampede to original performance styles provides ample evidence both of the desperation of today's most intellectually active performers and the narrowing and debilitating effect produced by such concentration on the past even in the performance of the music of the past itself.

Finally, it has become the fashion today, as we approach the millennium, to speculate about a possible end to various fundamental processes—an end to war, or to history, or perhaps even, for the gloomy among us, to culture. Yet fashion or no, little in the condition of serious music today and little especially in the condition of the piano as an instrument for the continuing performance of great music can inspire optimism about the future.

It is difficult to believe there is a shortage of talent in the world; it is equally difficult to believe that we now know less about music than did our forebears. What does seem clear, however, is that the human basis for the creation of great music, whether that basis is understood in terms of the individual, the family, the home, the folk, or the nation, is now somehow eroded. What we have is prosperity, freedom, perhaps even satiation. What we do not seem to be able to manage is the creation of permanent culture. For hundreds of years now, such creation has often manifested itself in the writing of great music. This time of glory does seem to have come to an end.

Still, as for me, and others like me, it will be hard to stop playing, or at least practicing, the beloved piano.

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The Intellectuals & the Cold War

George Szamuely

In May 1967, acting on motives that to this day remain mysterious, Tom Braden, who in the early 1950's had been head of the International Organizations Division of the CIA (and would subsequently earn a sort of celebrity as the voice "from the Left" on CNN'S nightly talk show, *Crossfire*), boasted in the pages of the *Saturday Evening Post* that the CIA had been directly involved in the work of an organization of liberal anti-Communist intellectuals known as the Congress for Cultural Freedom, and especially in the funding of its distinguished London-based monthly magazine, *Encounter*.

This news, coming on top of earlier revelations of CIA involvement with the National Student Association, had the results one might have expected. To members of the late 60's New Left, it was a "smoking gun" which confirmed what they had suspected all along: that the "criminal" American war in Vietnam, in which the CIA was playing so heavy a role, was itself but the logical consequence of cold-war liberalism.

As for the intellectuals themselves, many of whom by then had also come to oppose the American military presence in Southeast Asia but who at one time or another in the past had contributed to magazines or participated in conferences which the CIA, it now appeared, had helped to finance, they responded to the news in different ways. Some were genuinely shocked and said so; some pretended to be shocked; some drew a distinction between *their* kind of anti-Communism, which they preferred to call anti-Stalinism, and the "professional" anti-Communism espoused by American conservatives, by successive American governments, and, presumably, by the CIA itself, from which they heatedly dissociated themselves; and some, while deploring the deceit of secret funding, insisted that the cause in which they had labored and continued to labor was just and good, CIA or no CIA.*

The question on everyone's mind in 1967 was, "What were supposedly independent intellectuals doing accepting secret U.S. government funds?" Few bothered to ask a perhaps more pertinent question: "What was the U.S. government doing funding liberal intellectuals?" This is one of the questions that Peter Coleman attempts to answer in his new history of the Congress for Cultural Freedom, *The Liberal Conspiracy*.† Coleman, who is the editor of the Australian quarterly review, *Quadrant*—itself once funded by the Congress—begins his account with the story of the birth of the organization in Berlin in June 1950. Along the way, he competently and thoroughly describes the magazines it sponsored—among them *Encounter* and *Survey* in England; *Preuves* in France; *Tempo Presente* in Italy; *Cuadernos* in Spain; *Quest* in India—and recounts the arts festivals, the innumerable scholarly seminars, and the gigantic international conferences held under CCF auspices. Coleman concludes his tale with the slow demise of the Congress: how in the aftermath of the revelations about its secret source of funding it reemerged temporarily as the International Association of Cultural Freedom, now supported entirely by the Ford Foundation but with annually diminishing subventions, and how in January 1979 it finally dissolved.

Coleman, not surprisingly, is sympathetic to the work of the Congress. To the extent that he argues a thesis in his book, it is a retrospectively upbeat one, summarized in his final sentences:

> Today almost everyone including [Mikhail Gorbachev] agrees with the Congress's once lonely assessment of Soviet totalitarianism. . . . In contributing in so brilliant and timely a way to this public awareness throughout the world in a period of great danger, the Congress for Cultural Freedom was a historic success.

But is this true? Coleman is so fair-minded an author that much of the evidence he presents can be used to support a less cheering conclusion—not, to be sure, the conclusion of the Congress's critics on the hard Left, who abhorred its work altogether as an adjunct of what they regarded as a nefarious American foreign policy, but rather one based on an assessment of the Congress's fidelity, or lack of fidelity, to its own founding principles and goals. In fact, from the beginning there was a confusion about those goals that would eventually prove debilitating, and would in the end be the real reason the Congress proved to have a rather shorter life span than did some of the magazines it started.

According to Coleman, "the basic hallmark . . . of the Congress's anti-Communism was that it felt itself to be of the Left and on the Left." This needs to be qualified. In the early postwar years, with Stalin launching another Popular Front, it was indeed those who still preferred to describe themselves as socialists, many of them ex-Communists, who seemed best positioned

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* A sampling of intellectual opinion on the question can be found in a fascinating symposium published in the September 1967 Commentary, "Liberal Anti-Communism Revisited."

† Free Press, 313 pp., $22.95.

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to counter the Stalinist threat within the community of the liberal intelligentsia, especially in Western Europe. In the late 40's, the ranks of such intellectuals, guiding spirits of the early Congress, included Arthur Koestler, Ignazio Silone, Raymond Aron, Manes Sperber, and Franz Borkenau. But in those early days the emphasis fell less on partisan political affiliation than on the commitment to a common political venture: the point was to form, in Sidney Hook's words, the "nucleus for a Western community of intellectuals who despite all their differences on domestic matters felt embattled against the virus of neutralism that was spiritually disarming the West against Communist aggression."

In 1949, the Communist-inspired and -sponsored Waldorf-Astoria Cultural and Scientific Conference for World Peace featured such names as Pablo Picasso, Charlie Chaplin, F. O. Matthiessen, Albert Einstein, and Frank Lloyd Wright. At its own inaugurating conference in Berlin in June 1950, the Congress—attempting to create, as it were, an alternative "popular front"—responded with A. J. Ayer, James Burnham, Herbert Read, H. R. Trevor-Roper, Sidney Hook, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., and Carlo Schmidt. Although some of these latter figures were "of the Left and on the Left," others were not and never had been in any meaningful sense, and the same could be said of some of the Congress's five honorary presidents: Bertrand Russell, Karl Jaspers, John Dewey, Benedetto Croce, and Jacques Maritain.

It was in line with their desire to formulate a common and inclusive political goal that Arthur Koestler proclaimed the crucial dividing line in postwar politics as running no longer between capitalism and socialism but between "total tyranny [and] relative freedom." To a crowd of some 15,000 in a public park in the British sector of Berlin he read out the Freedom Manifesto he had written together with Manes Sperber. Its fourteen paragraphs ranged from the platitudinous ("The defense of intellectual liberty today imposes a positive obligation: to offer new and constructive answers to the problems of our time") to the profound ("In totalitarian states restrictions on freedom are no longer intended . . . as sacrifices imposed on the people, but are . . . represented as triumphs of progress and achievements of a superior civilization") to the abstruse ("No political philosophy or economic theory can claim the sole right to represent freedom in the abstract"). But for those who attended, the cry of freedom was the great thing, and as a unifying idea it was certainly more compelling than the transparently dishonest and tired slogan of "peace" trotted out at the Waldorf conference.

Within six months, however, Koestler was to resign from the executive of the Congress over its decision to invite such dubious friends of Western freedom as Jean-Paul Sartre and Simone de Beauvoir to a conference being planned for Paris in 1952. That conference never did take place. Instead, the Congress, whose Secretary General was now Nicolas Nabokov, a Russian-born composer and cousin of the novelist, organized a massive exposition of music, painting, sculpture, and literature. It was an extremely expensive undertaking, and a definite social and artistic success. But how many of the thousands who flocked to the entertainments saw any connection between them and the articles of the Freedom Manifesto, or any consequent reason to subscribe to those articles, was an open question.

For Sidney Hook, at any rate, all this was early evidence, as he would later put it in his memoirs, that the Congress was "more interested in acquiring a kind of respectability in the eyes of the predominantly nonpolitical, even neutralist, European intellectuals than in the effective militant opposition to Communist cultural influences." It was this tendency that soon led the American affiliate of the Congress, the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, into a break with the parent organization.

THE Congress, besides holding conferences, performed much good and important work—above all in sponsoring its magazines but also in providing relief to Hungarian writers and artists fleeing Soviet tanks in 1956, donating books and periodicals to individuals and libraries in Eastern Europe, helping banned writers find publishers in the West. Nonetheless, its achievements were a far cry from the hopes expressed in 1950. No doubt this had something to do with the distinctly unseasonable intellectual climate in which the Congress operated, and which (it could be argued) made it necessary, in order to remain "of the Left and on the Left," to balance every protest about, say, an act of repression in the East with an attack on American culture or American society.

But the larger problem is that the cause on behalf of which the Congress labored to win that support—the struggle against totalitarianism—seems to have been forgotten along the way. Indeed, Michael Josselson (the Congress's executive director and "the CIA man on the spot," as Irving Kristol has called him) went so far as to say that the "negative battle against Communism and all other forms of totalitarianism" was over by the mid-60's. In this respect the Congress followed the fashion in liberal anti-Communism that was also reflected in quite a number of the contributions to the September 1967 COMMENTARY symposium; as one writer put it, anti-Communism had become nothing more than "an ideological justification for American global involvement on the side of those who try to hold back the tide of fundamental change in the underdeveloped areas of the world."

Sidney Hook assigned most of the blame for the Congress's adoption of a newly anti-anti-Communist attitude to the leadership in Paris—in particular Nabokov. Coleman, by contrast, suggests that the Congress's direction (which he defends) may have been influenced by CIA tactics. Since he has been unable to obtain any new information on this latter point it must remain a matter of speculation.

BUT this returns us to the question of what the U.S. government was doing funding liberal intellectuals in the first place. William Colby, a former director of the CIA, re-

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marks in his memoirs that the International Organizations Division (the branch that actually financed the Congress) had "a firmly liberal coloration [which] viewed the principal struggle with the Communists internationally as one over the loyalties of voters attracted to social change and even socialism—whether they would be lured by the false promise of the Communists or could be brought to support the democratic socialism of the West." This sentence reveals much about the instinctive political sympathies of men like Colby, Tom Braden, and Cord Meyer, Braden's successor as head of the International Organizations Division and a former president of the United World Federalists. For them it was all but axiomatic that the Left stood for social progress, and for that reason deserved the support of the American government not just as a matter of tactics but as a matter of principle.

In some places and times, such support made good political sense. Trade unionists in France and Italy who were already fighting the Communists undoubtedly found CIA money useful. In France, however, the anti-Communists would probably have prevailed without it—the biggest blow suffered by the French Communists came at the hands of the socialist Guy Mollet, who in 1947 threw them out of his government without any CIA encouragement—whereas in Italy, by contrast, the so-called "opening to the Left," of which William Colby had been an early advocate, had the effect of ensuring, in Luigi Barzini's bitter words, that the Communists "acquired . . . an all-pervading tentacular influence they had never previously enjoyed or hoped for." And as for Great Britain, until the 1960's the anti-Communist Left was arguably less important intellectually, and less needful of support, than were the views of men like Evelyn Waugh, Karl Popper, and Michael Oakeshott, all stalwart opponents of Soviet totalitarianism from various points of view but none of whom subscribed to *dirigisme* of the Western variety.

IN ANY EVENT, and whatever certain people in a certain department of the CIA may have been after, as far as the work of the Congress was concerned the perceived need to be perpetually "of the Left and on the Left" led sometimes to grotesque intellectual contortions. A single example from the many recounted by the scrupulous Coleman: Josselson once begged Bertrand Russell not to resign as honorary president after Russell had written a letter to the Manchester *Guardian* comparing America with "other police states such as Nazi Germany and Stalin's Russia." As Diana Trilling (one of the leaders of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom) asked at the time, "How untruthful about America may a man be and still be useful to an organization which is pledged to the truth?"

What could the Congress have done instead? By sticking to the principles of the Freedom Manifesto, it could have established as its chief business the effort to give clear articulation to the factors that make free societies more successful and attractive than unfree ones. Certainly it lacked neither the funds nor the intellect for such a task. Indeed, the people whose names we still today continue to associate with the best work of the Congress—Irving Kristol, Melvin Lasky, the late Raymond Aron, Edward Shils, Leo Labedz, and others—are precisely those who remained true to that task.

If, then, the Congress's day has come and gone, it has gone for reasons more complicated and rather less admirable than its historian's verdict of success would lead one to believe.

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Reclaiming Yeats

Robert Richman

THE decision to publish a fourteen-volume *Collected Works of W. B. Yeats*—designed to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of his death—may help reclaim a poet who has become more or less the property of the universities. *The Poems*,* the first volume of the series, is for this reason especially welcome, even though an adequate "Definitive Edition" is already available. The differences between the new book and its predecessor are slight: four previously uncollected poems have been added, Yeats's rhetorical punctuation has been restored, and there is an expanded group of notes and appendices. All the same, the book gives us a chance to come into direct contact with the greatest poet to write English in our time, and that is something to celebrate.

The avalanche of scholarship since Yeats's death in 1939, collected in hundreds of scholarly volumes, learned journals, and symposium proceedings, includes much misguided and at times mind-numbing commentary. Oddly enough, the major offenders are not the Marxist, structuralist, or deconstructionist critics—though these are hardly blameless—but rather the perpetrators of what are often referred to as "Yeats studies." A typical example of this type of scholarship is a tedious investigation into exactly which woman, sculpture, or legend inspired which poem. Or, the focus will be on Yeats's involvement with the Russian mystic Madame Blavatsky, his affiliation with the Hermetic Society, or the metaphysical system propounded in his prose work, *A Vision*. In such studies, Yeats's poems are often presented as the equivalent of a child's connect-the-dots picture, in which a given inspiration or event results, quite magically, in a given poem.

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The Yeatsians have put to flight many ordinary readers who have been effectively warned away in the mistaken belief that Yeats's poetry is incomprehensible without the secret fund of knowledge the scholars alone possess. But that is not all. For even as they needlessly complicate, these dry-as-dust studies also criminally simplify, removing the genuine mystery and difficulty from poems that are the result of a lifetime's emotional and intellectual experience—experience that is, in fact, resistant to easy paraphrase or exegesis. More than a few of these critics give the ludicrous impression that anyone could write great poetry if only he subjected himself to the same historical forces Yeats was subjected to.

Some of those forces form the subject of the following lines:

> Now days are dragon-ridden, the nightmare
> Rides upon sleep: a drunken soldiery
> Can leave the mother, murdered at her door,
> To crawl in her own blood, and go scot-free;
> The night can sweat with terror as before
> We pieced our thoughts into philosophy,
> And planned to bring the world under a rule,
> Who are but weasels fighting in a hole.

This stanza is from "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen," a poem written during the period of struggle, known as "The Troubles," between Irish nationalists and the British Black-and-Tan soldiers that preceded the founding of Northern Ireland in 1921. The events had a profound effect on Yeats (as they did on everyone in Ireland), and it was inevitable thay they should turn up in his poetry. Yet what makes these lines from "Nineteen Hundred and Nineteen" so remarkable is the way they are at once immersed in the sequence of events that inspired them and also go far beyond those events.

Political poetry is usually the captive of its subject matter; such poetry is read, when it is read at all, for its historical interest. In Yeats's hands, however, the specific political occasion, which engaged him as an Irish patriot, becomes here the springboard for a wider reflection, not only on the universal, "dragon-ridden" problem of human conflict, but on the response of the artist to that conflict. Yeats's criticism of, really his contempt for, the idealism of those who by "philosophy" have "planned to bring the world under a rule"—an idealism which in the present instance did nothing to stop the shedding of blood, and in fact may have perpetuated it—extends beyond politics and politicians. It is no accident that the pronoun beginning the ante-penultimate line is the plural "We," for Yeats means to include in his indictment also the "idealism" of the artist who, feeling rejected by society, stands fastidiously and judgmentally apart from the ebb and flow of life.

Yeats's dilemma was that as a modernist poet he did indeed feel rejected by society, while as a man he often found himself in agreement with society's judgment of the likes of him. Out of the resulting tension arose a body of verse preoccupied in significant measure with the moral and emotional costs of art.

YEATS was for most of his life an ardent nationalist, serving as senator of the Irish Free State from 1922 to 1928 (and as chairman of the Commission on Coinage) and earlier playing a role in the founding (with Lady Augusta Gregory) of an Irish National Theater. Not surprisingly, much in the way of politics—from the Parnell controversy to the Easter Rebellion, and from the employers' lockout of Dublin strikers to the Troubles—was stitched into the fabric of his verse. But there was another side to

* *The Collected Works of W. B. Yeats: Volume I. The Poems, Revised,* edited by Richard J. Finneran, Macmillan, 751 pp., $32.50.

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Yeats, and that was his predilection for the mystical and otherworldly. This aspect of Yeats was deeply curious about moods and internal states of mind, the kind often forgotten or ignored in the world of politics and of ordinary social intercourse. Indeed, at times Yeats seemed to have preferred the mythical past to the semi-barbarous present.

Yeats's early fascination with Irish legends is attested to in the prose he wrote when young. First came *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888); then *The Celtic Twilight* (1893), a story collection that argued the essential mysticism of the Irish; and then *The Secret Rose* (1897), an anthology of Irish legends and tales. The poems written during these same years and collected in *The Wanderings of Oisin* (1889), *The Land of Heart's Desire* (1894), *The Wind Among the Reeds* (1899), and other books, are also populated with every manner of druids, fairies, ghosts, and spirits. Yet despite all this, and despite his early attraction to the Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood, to the Decadents, and to the symbolist movement, never did any of these turn-of-the-century impulses overwhelm Yeats the way they did other poets of the time, or muddy his own peculiar vision.

Proof of this can be seen vividly in the "Fergus" poems, written when Yeats was in his late twenties and in which he employed some obscure elements of Irish folklore to give shape to a more general concern with the ambitions and limitations of art. His skepticism concerning the unhindered pursuit of the path of "dreaming wisdom"—the phrase occurs in "Fergus and the Druids"—can be appreciated without any detailed knowledge of his biography, though it is useful to keep in mind the British literary atmosphere of the time. At a Christmas dinner party given in London in 1886, the host, Oscar Wilde, read to the guests—among them the twenty-three-year-old Yeats—an unpublished essay called "The Decay of Lying." Yeats agreed with Wilde that the "lies" told by artists are necessary, and necessary above all to the artists' own exalted state of consciousness; but his agreement remained partial, qualified by a wariness of those who, like Fergus in "Who Goes With Fergus?" ("For Fergus rules the brazen cars,/And rules the shadows of the wood,/And the white breast of the dim sea/And all dishevelled wandering stars"), or indeed like Wilde himself, were determined to "rule" through their art the world and the lives of others.

Yeats gave another turn to this theme in one of his greatest poems, "Leda and the Swan," a work that leans heavily for its ideas on Greek myth. Here, imagining the act of sexual violence out of which will emerge Helen of Troy and thus the entire chain of events that will inspire, in turn, some of the world's greatest poetry and drama, Yeats

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forces on the reader an acknowledgment of the connection between art and a kind of emotional brutality:

A sudden blow: the great wings
beating still
Above the staggering girl, her
thighs caressed
By the dark webs, her nape
caught in his bill,
He holds her helpless breast
upon his breast . . .

A shudder in the loins engenders
there
The broken wall, the burning
roof and tower
And Agamemnon dead . . .

But Yeats is hardly drawing up a one-sided moral balance sheet. The devastating truth propounded in these lines is itself softened and almost contradicted by the limpid, metrically ordered language, which makes a kind of silent case *for* the art purchased at such terrible cost. And the deep and powerful ambiguity held by Yeats in such exquisite balance is further underlined by the three questions that are posed in the poem: "How can those terrified vague fingers push/The feathered glory from her loosening thighs?/And how can body, laid in that white rush,/But feel the strange heart beating where it lies?" "Being so caught up/So mastered by the brute blood of the air,/Did she put on his knowledge with his power/Before the indifferent beak could let her drop?"

In the paperback edition of *Selected Poems and Two Plays of William Butler Yeats,* "Leda and the Swan" is followed by "Among School Children." (In the new book, as in the previous *Collected Poems,* the two are separated by one poem.) The first line of "Among School Children"—"I walk through the long schoolroom questioning"—forms a perfect coda to "Leda and the Swan," and indeed to Yeats's entire poetic career, for Yeats walked questioningly not only through the "long schoolroom" of life, but through his own often self-incriminating poetical attitudes as well.

In his early masterpiece, "The Lake Isle of Innisfree"—Yeats was twenty-five when he wrote it—the speaker can scarcely contain his exhilaration at the imaginative possibilities of poetry. These possibilities, crucial to the imparting of certain emotional truths, were not yet seen, or feared, by Yeats as being in the most extreme cases intertwined with a necessary amorality that warps and deforms the normal human engagement with life. That view, which would come later, is perhaps nowhere better expressed than in "The Dolls" (1914).

Nothing in Yeats's work disputes more dramatically the rewards of a life graced—or undone—by poetry than does this forceful and vivid imagining of an artist confronted with the violence of his own aesthetic projections; and yet it must immediately be added that "The Dolls," like all of the poems that cast a shadow on the pursuit of art, is a brilliant and beautiful verbal artifact whose every line makes an eloquent case against the sentiments being voiced. The shift in Yeats's outlook from hope to despair was accompanied by a stylistic shift: gone are the archaic language and misty poeticisms, their place taken by a language altogether colloquial and direct that with the passage of time will become still more reduced until in the end it is stripped even of the symbols on which the poet had long depended.

It was precisely Yeats's fear of getting too far from life, his uncertainty about lingering too long in the "woven shade" of art, which may have enabled him to explore the contours of lived experience with such unmatched rigor and beauty. If today he remains our greatest poetic chronicler of the human spirit, it is because, unlike T. S. Eliot, say, or Wallace Stevens, he never lost sight of the fact that art can only go so far when it relinquishes the mettlesome and unwieldy details of ordinary life. This is why Yeats's poems appeal, and will continue to appeal, and not just to working poets and critics, or to academics who see in them only the imprint of external events, but to readers in search of meaning and true feeling in art.

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Arik

WARRIOR: THE AUTOBIOGRAPHY OF ARIEL SHARON. By ARIEL SHARON with DAVID CHANOFF. *Simon & Schuster. 571 pp. $24.95.*

Reviewed by ELIOT A. COHEN

ONE comes to this book with many suspicions. Ariel Sharon, after all, enjoys a rather unsavory reputation even in many Zionist circles as the man who brought upon Israel the disaster of the Lebanon war and who today stands foursquare against an Israeli-Palestinian negotiation. Those with some knowledge of the history of the Israeli army may be even more suspicious: Sharon was the man who carried out some particularly bloody retaliation raids in the 1950's, who let his troops get sucked into an unnecessary battle in the Mitla Pass in 1956, and whose conduct in the 1974 Yom Kippur War brought him close to court martial. To others he simply appears a demagogic general-in-politics, a man who can turn out a mob chanting "Arik King of Israel," and whose appearance and demeanor suggest both slyness and ambition. And in any event, what can one expect of an autobiography by a serving cabinet minister who still has a political career before him and has made use of a freelance writer to help with the nitty-gritty of producing a book?

In fact, however, this is not just a good book, it is an extraordinarily compelling and engrossing one. Even someone who comes to it loathing Sharon's politics and mistrusting his past behavior will go away not only more knowledgeable about both of these things but, probably, more sympathetic to the man himself. Although Sharon can be disingenuous about what he has done, there is a curiously earnest and at times almost innocent feel to this memoir. Over some of his emotions Sharon draws a veil of privacy—he does not, for example, describe at length his feelings upon the death of his first wife in a car crash—but he also provides more than enough material to impart a sense of his psychological makeup. Indeed, complaints by some reviewers that the book is insufficiently forthcoming on this score betray either the degraded contemporary taste for exhibitionism masquerading as honesty or a simple inability to read carefully.

SHARON tells of a difficult childhood on a pre-state moshav (cooperative farm). His parents were Russian immigrants, but his mother shared little of the deep, almost fanatical Zionist determination of his father, whose stubbornness his son inherited. Ariel also absorbed from his father a brusque willingness to break from the pack: Samuil Sharon was rarely on good terms with his fellow moshavniks, and he had little use for the various streams of Labor Zionism that dominated the pre-independence Jewish community in Palestine. Indeed, Samuil Sharon's revulsion at the "season"—the brief period when the Haganah cooperated with the British authorities in hunting down members of the Irgun—led him to forbid Ariel to join the Palmach, the elite standing force of the Haganah.

Sharon served instead in the Jewish Settlement Police, a British-sponsored force operated by the Haganah. He fought in Israel's War of Independence in 1948 and was badly wounded in the battle for Latrun, where, for a time, he was left behind on the field. He describes waking up in the hospital and being visited by

> parents of boys in my platoon, searching for their sons. So little information had gotten out about the battle, and with the primitive communications of those days who could tell how much of it might be accurate. I hardly knew myself who had been left alive. It was so hard to lie there and know that they were standing silently in the room waiting for me to come awake enough to talk to them, and so hard to know that I had survived and their sons hadn't. What could I tell them—about what the Arabs did to the dead and wounded? About what they did to prisoners? These people just stood there, people I had known all my life. In their silence I imagined I could hear them saying that they had given the most precious things they had into my hands. And now where are they, you who are alive? Tell, they are saying, where are our sons?

By war's end most of his friends were dead. He left the army convinced that many of those losses were unnecessary and that, given the chance, he could have prevented them.

THIS brings us to the bulk of the book, which deals with Sharon's career in the Israeli army through the 1973 war. Here again some reviewers have ostentatiously stifled yawns, dismissing the narrative as military detail of little interest to the general reader. They could not be more wrong, for Sharon's story offers fascinating insight into the strengths and weaknesses of the Israeli army and its evolution from a ragtag underground organization to the formidable, nearly half-million-member force of today.

In 1953 Sharon was recalled from his studies to set up an elite commando unit for conducting retaliatory raids against Israel's neighbors, in order to stem a rising tide of sabotage and murder launched over the borders. Unit 101, as it was called, was soon amalgamated with the paratroop battalion of the Israel Defense Force (IDF), which Sharon subsequently commanded. From there he went on to lead a

ELIOT A. COHEN is *the co-author of* Military Misfortunes: The Anatomy of Failure in War, *published by the Free Press.*

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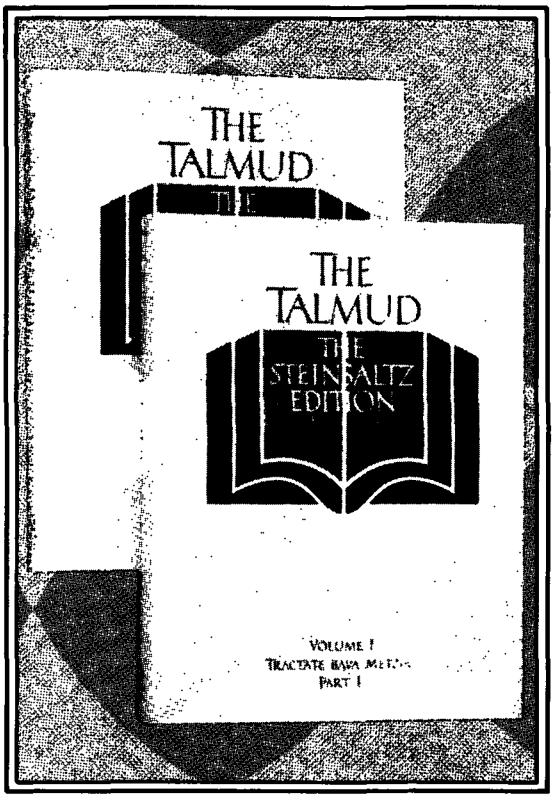

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paratroop brigade in the 1956 war, to serve as chief of staff of the Northern Command, to head a division in the Sinai in 1967, finally rising to the post of General Officer Commanding South in the early 1970's. From this post he retired in 1973, only to be recalled as a division commander again in the Yom Kippur War.

Sharon describes with a rare clarity the approach to training and battle which made him an extraordinarily formidable battlefield commander. The great secret of Israeli military success lies not so much in cleverness, although there is something of that, but in single-minded concentration on the essentials of tactics and leadership. From Sharon's account three basic tenets of his military philosophy become clear.

First, soldiers must be absolute masters of the terrain in which they fight: when they know exactly where they are and understand and feel at home in every *wadi* and on every ridge, their military effectiveness rises immeasurably. Interestingly enough, Sharon, who shows considerable respect for the Arab fighting man, attributes some of the Egyptian collapse in 1967 to the fear of the desert felt by soldiers whose homes lay in the green Nile delta.

Secondly, contrary to the conventional picture of Israeli military men as improvisers and muddlers-through, Sharon was a great planner. His breakthrough at Abu Ageila in 1967 was a masterful, remarkably complicated set-piece battle made possible only by meticulous planning and rehearsal.

Finally, Sharon, recalling his own terrifying experiences in 1948 and on another occasion, made it a cardinal principle that no Israeli soldier, dead or wounded, would ever—*ever*—be left behind. And, he insisted, if any Israeli should fall prisoner, his compatriots must immediately launch a wave of military kidnappings to secure Arab prisoners for an exchange.

UNIT 101 and the paratroops made a vital contribution to the rehabilitation of an IDF weakened by post-independence demobilization, by the influx of new immigrants whose discipline was often poor and whose grip on the language was uncertain, and by the dominance of an officer corps too influenced by the example of the British army. In the early 1950's, some of the best officers from the War of Independence—including the brilliant young general Yigal Allon, commander of the Palmach—had left active duty. The army was dominated less by homegrown products of the underground than by men who had served with the British during World War II. Many of the latter, though vital to the development of the technical branches of the army and the establishment of its institutions, lacked the leadership élan and the tactical flair of the former. As a result, the army botched many early retaliatory operations, with grievous losses to the men involved as well as to Israeli prestige and self-confidence.

Sharon's roughneck outfit changed all that, if at a price. Unit 101 was composed mainly of mavericks like Sharon himself, and they played by their own rules. The results, at times, were raids that inflicted, intentionally or not, far more damage than had been planned. When Sharon's men raided the Jordanian town of Kibbiya (lugging with them at least 600 kilograms of explosives), they killed 69 civilians hidden in the houses that they blew up. Sharon pressed for action whenever a terrorist outrage occurred, and he pushed his instructions to the limit. In this he was the perfect subordinate to that flawed genius, Moshe Dayan, who preferred to give vague authority for an operation which he would endorse if successful and repudiate if not.

Sharon's top soldier, a legend among the commandos, was a man named Meir Har Zion. *Warrior* recounts how, after Har Zion's sister and her boyfriend were killed on a hike in Jordan by Bedouin tribesmen, the commando determined to get revenge. Sharon says that he tried to talk him out of it, but decided in the end to give Har Zion his chance by supplying him with weapons, a car, and a driver. The avenger used these to capture six Bedouin from the same tribe—though not, it would appear, the perpetrators; he and his friends killed five and sent the survivor back to spread the tale. It is revealing that Sharon shrugs the espisode off as "a throwback to tribal days, the kind of ritual revenge the Bedouin understood perfectly."

Here we have the dark side of Sharon, which appears throughout his career. He explains each of the episodes—Kibbiya, the Har Zion revenge killings, the unnecessary advance into the Mitla Pass in 1956, all the way to the 1982 massacres by Christian militiamen at the Israeli-controlled camps of Sabra and Shatila in Lebanon—in ways that are, individually, plausible. But one is left wondering why, at every stage in his career, there hangs over this man the shadow of deeds (not necessarily his own) that are at best grim, at worst evil.

Some of Sharon's occasional manifestations of amorality have as much to do with a ruthless insight into human affairs as with an undeniable hunger for glory. He is not a man to call things otherwise than by their names, and although he may deceive, one suspects that he does not deceive himself. Sharon's description of his remarkable accomplishment in putting down the PLO in the Gaza Strip during the 1970's shows this logic in action.

SHARON and the paratroops set a tone for the reborn IDF, but without winning the love of many of his peers. Even in the early years he was an outsider, not having served in the Palmach and having no ties to the ruling Labor party save for the faction around David Ben-Gurion. In the Sinai campaign of 1956, when he stretched an order to send his men through the Mitla Pass, leading to an ambush and an unnecessary bloody firefight before their rescue, he earned the dislike of more than one competent soldier.

Sharon chronicles in some detail his longstanding feud with Chaim Bar-Lev over, among other things, the defense of Sinai after 1967. Where his rivals favored a rigid defense of the Suez Canal—the famous Bar-Lev Line—in order to deny the Egyptians the possibility

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of any territorial gains, Sharon favored more fluid deployments that would allow the Egyptians to attack and then take advantage of Israeli superiority in maneuver to defeat them. As GOC South he closed down much of the Bar-Lev Line, and as a divisional commander in 1973 he vainly urged that the outposts along the Canal be evacuated immediately.

On both counts he was probably right, although something can be said for the logic of the original Line. Concerning his behavior later in the Yom Kippur War, controversy remains, and will not be dispelled by this book. His readiness in the immediate aftermath of the war to criticize other generals sharply and in the American press did him little good with his colleagues.

UNLIKE many generals, Sharon made a successful go of it in politics, helping to set up the Likud bloc out of the divided Center and right-wing parties of the early 1970's. He describes why it is that good soldiers are baffled and infuriated by politicians:

> Like politics, military life is a constant struggle. But with all the difficulties and bitterness that may develop, at least [in the military] there are certain rules. In politics there are no rules, no sense of proportion, no sensible hierarchy. An Israeli military man setting foot in this new world . . . has had moments of exultation and moments of deepest grief. . . . He knows what it is to be supremely confident, even inspired. But he has also suffered the most abject fear and the deepest horror. He has made decisions about life and death, for himself as well as for others.
>
> The same person enters the political world and finds that he has one mouth to speak with and one hand to vote with, exactly like the man sitting next to him. And that man perhaps has never witnessed or experienced anything profound or anything dramatic in his life. He does not know either the heights or the depths. He has never tested himself or made critical decisions or taken responsibility for his life or the lives of his fellows. And this man—it seems incredible—but this man too has one mouth and one hand.

Yet Sharon, who describes his entry into politics with more than a touch of irony and dark humor, was successful in that sphere as well. His career culminated, and nearly ended, in his tenure as Minister of Defense. Although he does not cover this at length in his memoirs, his service in the Kirya, Israel's Pentagon, during the early 1980's marked one of the most concentrated efforts to engage in long-range strategic planning since Ben-Gurion left the Ministry of Defense.

SHARON'S account of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982 adds some detail but no startling new insights. Even his own version suggests that he did indeed, as has been charged, mislead the Israeli cabinet into approving a relatively limited 40-kilometer-deep operation to wipe out PLO bases in southern Lebanon when he knew that the logic of events would bring the IDF considerably farther north. He excuses his behavior by claiming that no cabinet had ever been so meticulously briefed, day by day, on the progress of the fighting; but that is hardly the point.

Sharon's behavior in the case of Lebanon reveals an element of continuity in his general approach to Israeli national security—namely, his belief that Israelis must trick themselves in order to summon up the resolve for dealing with threats to their existence. Throughout the book, for example, he asserts that Israelis must settle in the West Bank (Judea and Samaria) in order to prevent themselves, in a moment of weakness, from giving in to international pressure and permitting the creation of a new Palestinian state. More than once in his career Sharon appears to have re-

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garded his countrymen and their political leaders as too weak to be trusted in a clinch to do the necessary thing for Israel's security. Instead, they must be deceived or manipulated, not by outright lies but by shadings of the truth and by first steps which will inevitably lead to others in ways foreseen by Sharon but not by his compatriots.

In the case of Lebanon, Sharon grievously miscalculated the domestic consequences of waging this kind of war and, I suspect, the real possibilities for achieving his objectives, including the forging of an explicit Israeli-Lebanese partnership. But in all his actions there was a hard if flawed logic, just as there is in his stance on the Palestinian problem. For a long time Sharon has argued vociferously that the Palestinians need and deserve a state, but not on the West Bank and the Gaza; their state is Jordan, which has a Palestinian majority and occupies the greater part of mandatory Palestine. Most Israelis, by contrast, have considered the Hashemite kingdom of Jordan to be far preferable as a neighbor, and in the main they have been right. But it is conceivable that Sharon is at least partly correct, for a geographically, politically, militarily, and economically truncated Palestinian ministate would probably *not* assuage the Palestinian demand for a state.

Even more than for most Israelis, Sharon's life has been marked by success and tragedy. In the Likud itself his position is insecure, and he is at odds with the leader of his party. But he is a sixty-one-year-old man in a country of young generals but old politicians, and so for many years to come he will have his say in the politics of his nation. One may go further. It is undoubtedly Sharon's ambition to become Prime Minister of Israel. That will probably not happen, save in one circumstance. In the highly unlikely event that the country were to find itself facing catastrophe, Israelis might turn to a man with the hard will, hot patriotism, and cold intelligence (one should not call it wisdom) of Ariel Sharon. There are many reasons for hoping that hour will not arrive.

Terrorism in Southern Africa

PRISONERS OF A DREAM: THE SOUTH AFRICAN MIRAGE. HISTORICAL ESSAY ON THE DENTON HEARINGS. By LEO RADITSA. *Prince George Street Press. 467 pp. $25.95 (paper).*

Reviewed by
RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS

For five days in March 1982, Jeremiah Denton (who was then a Republican Senator from Alabama) held hearings on "The Role of the Soviet Union, Cuba, and East Germany in Fomenting Terrorism in Southern Africa." The hearing room was frequently crowded with activists, the curious public, and the press, but very little that was said there, especially by young black Africans who had escaped the terrorism and wanton brutality of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Southwest African People's Organization (SWAPO), ever appeared in the general media. Leo Raditsa, a classicist by training, was so outraged by what he took to be further evidence of a systematic cover-up in the service of a disinformation campaign aimed at advancing Soviet purposes in southern Africa that he wrote this book.

Raditsa describes his work as a "historical essay on the Denton hearings," and it is historical indeed, reaching back to the first Dutch settlers in South Africa in 1652, offering an account of the Anglo-Boer War, the unification of South Africa in 1910, and much else—all interspersed with references to the developments of the last few years. The result, however, is a frequently disjointed book that does not actually get to the Denton hearings until page 373, and then the reader encounters what amounts to an abbreviated transcript interwoven with running editorial comment on the evils of Communism.

RICHARD JOHN NEUHAUS *is director of Religion and Public Life, a research and education institute in New York. Among his books is* Dispensation: The Future of South Africa as South Africans See It *(Eerdmans).*

It would be easy to dismiss *Prisoners of a Dream,* and I expect it will be generally dismissed where it is not totally ignored. Its prolixity is off-putting and its frequent intemperance of judgment is not reassuring. One wishes, for example, that Raditsa had explored more thoroughly interpretations other than that the United States has willy-nilly collaborated with the Soviet Union in undermining freedom in southern Africa. For instance, former Assistant Secretary of State Chester Crocker's negotiation for the withdrawal of Cuban troops from Angola and for the independence of Namibia may not be the great diplomatic achievement many have deemed it to be, but Raditsa is hardly convincing in portraying Crocker as a confidence man manipulating "the language of mirage" on behalf of a State Department determined to advance its sinister schemes by taking charge after "Reagan lost control of his foreign policy." Nor, for that matter, is Jonas Savimbi, the leader of the UNITA insurgency in Angola, quite the unalloyed champion of humane and democratic values that Raditsa seems to think. One could equally well question other interpretations here that are asserted rather than argued.

Yet it would be a mistake to dismiss *Prisoners of a Dream.* Raditsa is surely right that events in southern Africa are subject to widespread misconceptions which more often than not play into the hands of the declared enemies of democratic freedom. No sensible person can doubt that intellectuals in the West are, as Raditsa writes, often "fascinated by totalitarian violence," and are therefore inclined to excuse or discount the terrible things that Communists do and threaten to do. More importantly, the book provides a great deal of information on ideology, alliances, and behavior of groups like the ANC and SWAPO, and the eyewitness testimonies from the Denton hearings speak with a compelling urgency that must not be ignored.

Raditsa may be right in believing that, Gorbachev notwithstanding, the Soviet Union has not changed one whit in its expansionist de-

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signs on southern Africa. Maybe, too, what is thought to be the Crocker triumph will turn out to have been a mirage. Possibly Savimbi has been double-crossed, and it could be that Fidel Castro has every reason to believe he can keep his troops in Angola as long as they are needed to maintain totalitarians in power. Perhaps it is true, finally, that the United States, inadvertently or otherwise, has sabotaged the efforts of the South African government to move peacefully toward a more just society beyond apartheid.

These dour judgments and others may turn out to be justified—but maybe not. *Prisoners of a Dream* would have been more persuasive had it engaged, even if to refute, the arguments for measured hope (*very* measured hope) that southern Africa has in the last several years been moved a little closer toward the prospect of stability with something like democratic freedom. Of course all the returns are not in and will not be for a very long time, but Raditsa's dismissal of that measured hope reflects a style of anti-Communism that lends unwarranted credibility to the apocalyptic revolutionism of the anti-anti-Communists who will likely pay him no mind.

Dreamscape

DANUBE: A JOURNEY THROUGH THE LANDSCAPE, HISTORY, AND CULTURE OF CENTRAL EUROPE. By CLAUDIO MAGRIS. *Farrar Straus & Giroux. 416 pp. $22.95.*

Reviewed by JONATHAN ROSEN

THE Danube is an excellent subject for a book, especially today when the question of Central European independence, political and cultural, has been raised with renewed fervor. The river, the second longest in Europe, has remained an enduring marker of a region where boundaries have shifted violently or lost their significance altogether and become as much a matter of memory as of cartography. But for Claudio Magris, a professor of German literature at the University of Trieste, the questions posed by the river are not merely historical, or particular to a single region. He is preoccupied with questions of belonging—to culture, to history, to soil—and with divisions between East and West, self and society, nature and the man-made world. "Ever since Heraclitus," he writes early in his book,

> the river has been *the* image for the questioning of identity, beginning with the old conundrum as to whether one can or cannot put one's foot in the same river twice.

The basic structure of *Danube* is provided by the river itself, which Magris follows from its source in the Black Forest to its terminus in the Black Sea. The nine sections of the book correspond roughly to the geographical areas traversed as Magris moves from Germany to Austria to Hungary, passing finally through Yugoslavia, Rumania, and Bulgaria to the river's end. But *Danube* would hardly prove a useful guide to a traveler, and it is not intended as one. Magris submits to his own stream of consciousness as much as to the river's course, and trips to the library are as much in evidence as trips to castles, villages, cafés, and graveyards. He includes the work of genuine scholars as well as the pseudo-scientific studies of learned cranks. He mingles personal history, world history, and literary history—all of which makes *Danube* a difficult book to summarize.

The book's first section, "A Question of Gutters," is devoted to the sources of the Danube, which are by no means certain. Magris relishes this ambiguity, in particular the unclear link between the Danube and the Rhine. He cites the fanciful suggestion of an 18th-century writer that a house with two gutters spills water into the two

JONATHAN ROSEN *is a freelance writer living in New York.*

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streams which form on either side of its sloping roof. Though modern science has come closer to the truth, it is the symbolic relationship of the Rhine and the Danube that attracts Magris, for each of the two rivers bears a cultural burden. In particular, the Danube's divergent flow to the East carries with it the idea of Central Europe's separateness from the truculent spirit of nationalism that has so often engulfed the lands of the Rhine:

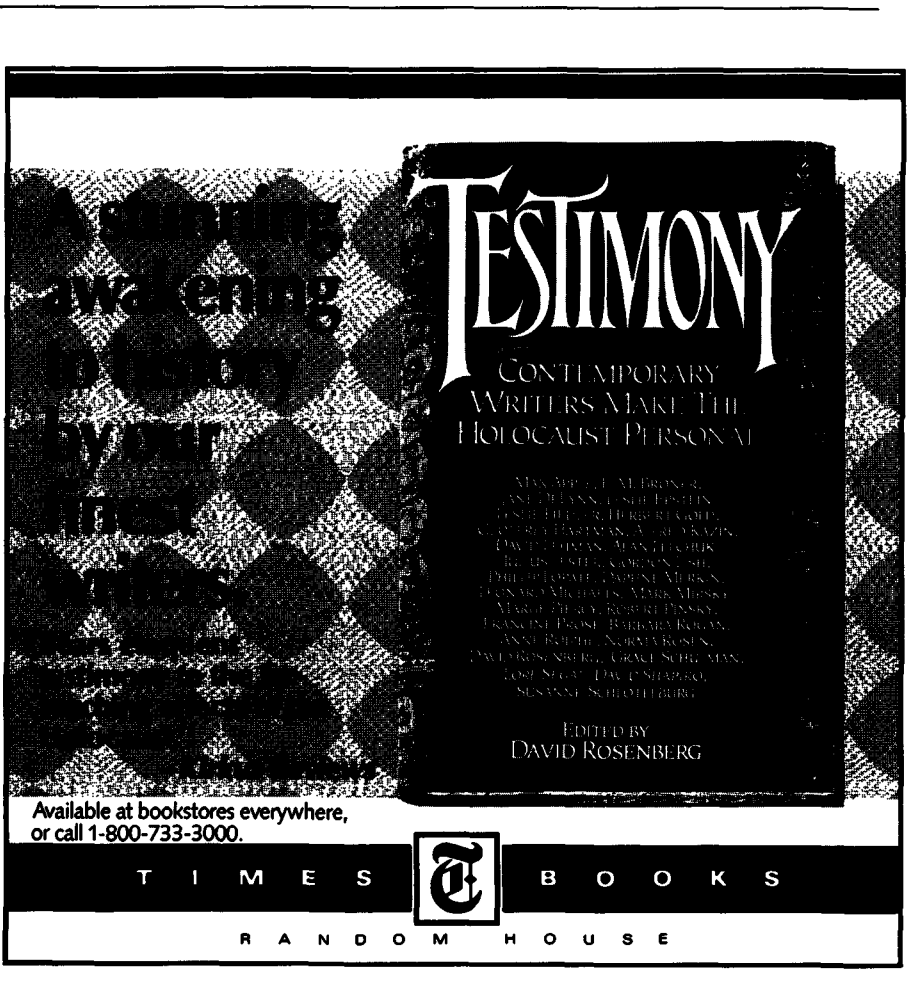
> The Danube is often enveloped in a symbolic anti-German aura. It is the river along which different peoples meet and mingle and crossbreed, rather than being, as the Rhine is, a mythical custodian of the purity of the race.

This would give us a Central Europe that is, in Milan Kundera's words, "conceived not as territory but as culture." And indeed at its best the river, for Magris, does form a kind of fertile crescent of Central European culture, spawning such writers as Stifter, Musil, and Canetti. Heidegger grew up "in a little town on the banks of the youthful Danube." Kafka spent a year nursing tuberculosis in a nearby sanatorium. Bruckner played the organ in the church of Sankt Florian. And Goethe's mistress and muse was born near the Danube in a house marked with a plaque that reads "Marianne Willemer née Jung—Goethe's Suleika."

On the other hand, Magris understands that the opposite is also true, that a river which runs past Mauthausen concentration camp may simply be "an emissary from those German waters to the East." Unfortunately, this interesting dichotomy between Rhine and Danube is not a sustained theme—like many of the ideas in *Danube*, it rises tantalizingly to the surface, only to sink a few pages later into the swirl of information and anecdote that dominates the book.

Danube moves not like a journey but like the dream of a journey; and like a dreamer, Magris is always shading the historical into the personal. If his highly idiosyncratic and highly personalized account of the river and the region has its undeniably entertaining and edifying moments, his reach, though broad, is not always deep. This is not just a matter of the mass of details and observations, or of a style that threatens to swallow up what is most interesting about the region by swamping it in subjectivity. There is something else, too, namely, Magris's belief that "in the pure present, the only dimension . . . in which we live, there is no history." This conviction is the book's shaping force—and the reason that, for all its historical detail, *Danube* seems strangely hollow.

"At no single instant," Magris writes, "is there such a thing as the fascist period or the October Revolution because in that fraction of a second there is only the mouth swallowing saliva, the movement of a hand, a glance out the window." If that is so, the author has neatly freed himself of all obligations to the past, and this freedom Magris puts to unsettling uses. Thus, noting in passing the 1938 suicide of Egon Friedell, humorist and historian, he comments, "That leap from the window was his last *Witz*, his joke at the expense of the Gestapo who were coming to arrest him." Somehow, one doubts Friedell took so sanguine a view of the event. Or again, imagining Céline, that disturbing genius of French literature who fled along the Danube with the retreating German army, Magris allows himself a wholly fanciful interpretation of why this anti-Semite collaborated during the war with the Nazis: "Like a grieving guilty Messiah, he identifies himself with the Nazi butchers because he sees them losing." Finally, in a chapter entitled "The Kitsch of Evil," Magris warns against "pathological explanations" for the behavior of Josef Mengele—the notorious Nazi doctor who would "gouge out eyes which he kept threaded on strings and hung on the walls of his room"—because after the war Mengele curbed those impulses "just as



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one learns to live with not being able to become a millionaire or go to bed with Hollywood starlets."

Danube is full of this sort of reckless abolition of hierarchical meaning. History here has no guilty parties and no innocent ones. When Magris describes the totalitarian architecture of Budapest as embodying the "*Kollosal* style like Milan Station or Grand Central," thereby amalgamating a monstrosity of fascist bombast with a gem of Beaux Arts styling which miraculously does not dwarf the people inside, subjectivity (in this case indistinguishable from gross political bias) ceases to be an aspect of the book and becomes instead its thesis.

It is ironic that a book so concerned with boundaries seems so incapable of making distinctions. The ground Magris walks on is steeped in history, but for the author of *Danube*, so much history, so crowded together, comes to equal no history at all. Posing as a search for sources and deeper meaning, *Danube* moves farther from understanding the farther it travels down the river, until even the landscape is rendered unreal. It may be that no one ever steps into the same river twice; Magris has not fully stepped into it once.

In the Academy

THE WAR AGAINST THE INTELLECT: EPISODES IN THE DECLINE OF DISCOURSE. By PETER SHAW. *University of Iowa Press. 181 pp. $22.50.*

Reviewed by MICHAEL J. NETH

ANYONE inquiring into the present state of humanities in the American academy may expect to confront a grotesque spectacle. Many of today's middle-aged and younger faculty and their graduate-student protégés, entranced by fashionable but nihilistic French philosophies or compelled by the imperatives of politics and ideology, have abandoned the notion that they have a duty to transmit to their students some idea of the achievements of Western art and thought. Instead, we now find a reflexively adversarial questioning of tradition and inherited standards of discourse, a relentlessly subversive hostility toward the Greco-Roman framework and Judeo-Christian fabric of our civilization, and a quasi-sophisticated skepticism toward the artistic and philosophical treasures it has given us. As Peter Shaw puts it in his important new book, *The War Against the Intellect,* the "guardians" of culture have become its "traducers."

The War Against the Intellect is a collection of essays written over the last fourteen years on subjects ranging from a number of currently prevailing trends in literary theory (deconstruction, Marxism, feminism), to Ezra Pound's abuses of American history in his late *Cantos,* to the pervasiveness of plagiarism in both the literary and scientific communities. There is even a piece on that most esoteric of fields, textual scholarship. Yet the volume coheres, thanks to Shaw's ability to extract from each of his subjects a persuasive cross-section of evidence to fortify the thesis adumbrated in his title. Like Jacques Barzun before him in *The House of Intellect* (1959), Shaw here exposes both the excesses of pedantry and the penchant which some Western intellectuals have for projecting the *malheur* they feel onto one or another bugbear—capitalism, authoritarianism, the tyranny of logic, or (the newest addition) patriarchy. But whereas in 1959 Barzun believed that intellect was "in peril, though not yet in mortal danger," in 1989 Peter Shaw is convinced that we have entered upon a "dark age of the humanities."

Two essays that give grounds for this pessimism are "The Decline of Criticism" and "The Politics of Deconstruction." It is difficult to overestimate the influence upon literary theory of deconstruction's

MICHAEL J. NETH, *a new contributor, is a doctoral candidate in English and Comparative Literature at Columbia.*

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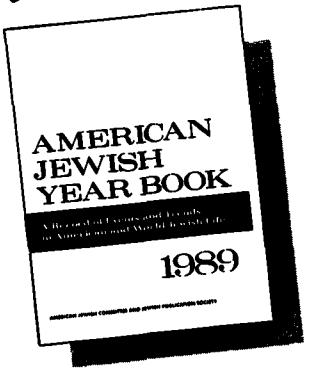

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skeptical assault upon "logocentrism," the assertion that texts carry determinate meanings and that words are something more than the playthings of a critic's subjective fancy. In *Skeptical Engagements* (1986), Frederick Crews illustrated how deconstruction is a self-validating proposition: since any one reading of a text will not coincide perfectly with any other, all meanings, no matter how manifestly removed they might be from an author's intent, are admissible. Peter Shaw's contribution is to show, clearly, how closely this professed relativism of meaning is bound up with the singularly *un*relativistic aims of Marxism and other so-called "oppositional" ideologies.

For one thing, deconstructionism's roots lie historically in the abortive Paris student uprising of 1968, as the Marxist critic Terry Eagleton (cited by Shaw) has pointed out. For another, the jargon of deconstruction is replete with terms borrowed from the Marxist lexicon like "authoritarian," "reactionary," "hierarchical," "tyrannical," "imperialistic," "hegemonic." In an ultimate irony discussed by Shaw, several prominent radical critics have now begun to chide their erstwhile deconstructionist allies for failing to enlist their talents explicitly enough in the service of "radical social change."

A SIMILAR kind of intramural squabbling beleaguers practitioners of the various feminist literary schools. In "Feminist Literary Criticism," Shaw traces the evolution of these schools from the early stages of "protest over the traditional depiction of women in fiction" through a period in which positive female role-models were sought in literature to today's murkier vista, within which feminism emerges as a house hopelessly and bitterly divided. On the one hand are those who might be called the mainstream ideological opponents of "patriarchy," with their desire to attribute all wrongs to the predominance of male power and the repression of women. On the other hand are the various subgroups—black feminists, Chicana feminists, lesbian feminists, lesbian *and* minority feminists, and so on—who charge the mainstream group with discrimination and insensitivity toward alternative manifestations of womanhood.

Add to this already volatile mixture the *politically* radical feminists who believe that patriarchal tyranny goes hand-in-glove with capitalism and economic repression, and then the proponents of "French structural biologism" who argue the merits of "vaginal criticism" as against a "clitoral hermeneutics" (and some of whom actually champion illogical writing and weak-mindedness as quintessentially feminine counterpoints to the rigidities of male "phallogocentric" logic), and theoretical diversity degenerates into sheer intellectual entropy. The net result is stupefying. In the literary field, where, as Shaw writes, women in-

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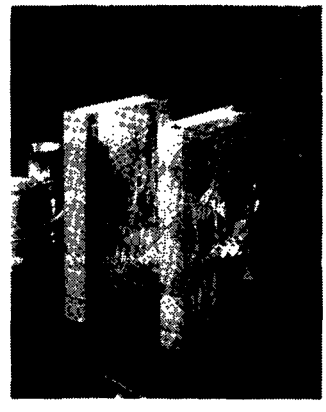

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contestably excel, "feminist literary critics, starting out in the conviction that women writers had long suffered at the hands of male critics, have ended up fostering an image of women at least as insulting as any that they set out to protest."

THE main flaw of *The War Against the Intellect* is that one or two of the essays seem outdated or incomplete. Thus, in a note appended as an update to "The American Heritage and its Guardians," a 1975 discussion of the chaotic state of editorial practice in the Center for Editions of American Authors, Shaw neglects to mention Jerome J. McGann's *A Critique of Modern Textual Criticism* (1983), now the most readily accessible revisionist polemic in the ongoing debate between advocates of "authorial intention" and the "sociological" textual critics. More seriously, Shaw does not cite the work of G. Thomas Tanselle, the textual scholar and editor of Herman Melville, who is far and away the most rigorously consistent and intellectually formidable spokesman for the doctrine of authorial intention.

On a different note, Shaw nowhere takes issue with the "new historicism," the latest entry into the field of "oppositional" literary criticism. In its more strident forms, new historical theory blends the (Lacanian) principle of "absence" with both the deconstructionists' insistence upon subjectivism and the subversive goals of Marxism. By means of this potent combination one recent critic, for example, has discovered that William Wordsworth's great nature poem, "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey," is actually about the appalling social conditions of industrial England which led homeless vagabonds to live around the ruins of the abbey and beg for coins from the tourists who visited it—this, despite the fact that, as the critic herself emphasizes, the abbey is never so much as mentioned in the poem and the "vagrant dwellers" appear only once in its 159 lines. But this, we are told, is because of the poet's suppression (or "erasure") of stark reality, his "displacement" of it, and his substitution of "private" reflections on man's interaction with nature. (For the record, Wordsworth began "Tintern Abbey" as he was departing the region, and his fond memories later prompted him to write that "no poem of mine was composed under circumstances more pleasant for me to remember than this.")

IN THE face of current assaults upon humane studies, Shaw concludes that a "minimal case" to be made for them is that "our predecessors thought and expressed some things in ways that cannot be improved upon." Not only does this modest premise enable one to gain a valuable perspective on the chaos left in the wake of the various attacks upon the liberal arts, it also revives the honorable belief that the great poets and philosophers of the West have useful truths to impart, that the voices speaking down the centuries can resonate within us, and that the people behind them are human beings, not archetypal class oppressors or proto-lesbians. In Shaw's trenchant words, such an awareness can provide "a sense that there is something more appropriate than our evaluation of [the past], and more important than anyone's attempt to deconstruct it. This something is the way in which the past begins to measure *us*."

The Tragedy of Soviet Jewry

THE JEWS IN THE SOVIET UNION SINCE 1917. By NORA LEVIN. *New York University Press. 2 vols. 1,013 pp. $100.00.*

THE JEWS OF THE SOVIET UNION. By BENJAMIN PINKUS. *Cambridge University Press. 397 pp. $34.50.*

Reviewed by RICHARD PIPES

THE Nazis hated the Jews and murdered them. The Russian Communists, while professing to abhor ethnic prejudice, systemati-

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cally killed the Jewish national and religious community. The full dimension of the tragedy of Russian Jewry is only now becoming known. It is a story of a relentless assault on Jewish religious institutions and the bases of Jewish economy, an assault which since 1917 has transformed the world's largest Jewish community into a demoralized and disoriented people.

With the partitions of Poland in the 18th century, czarist Russia suddenly acquired over one million Jews whom it did not know how to fit into its rigid estate structure. It solved the problem by confining them to the territories of the defunct Polish commonwealth and enrolling them in the merchant estate, which had the effect of excluding Jews from agricultural occupations and residence in villages, as well as from the territory of Russia proper.

In dealing with its Jewish population, the czarist government alternated between pressures for assimilation and measures which ensured that the Jews would remain isolated. It allowed them, however, to maintain their religious and national institutions, to pursue trade and artisanship, and to emigrate.

THE artificial restrictions placed on them by means of discriminatory laws and the rising tide of anti-Semitic violence from the 1880's onward drove many secular Russian Jews to embrace liberal and socialist causes. As the late Nora Levin shows in her splendid work, however, both before and during the 1917 Revolution the majority of politically active Russian Jews supported Zionism. It was a highly visible but not numerous minority that shed their Jewish identity and joined Russian revolutionary parties. The latter, in the words of Leon Trotsky, considered themselves neither Jews nor Russians but socialists. To them, Jews were not a nation but a class of exploiters whose fate it was to dissolve and assimilate.

As czarist Russia disintegrated, the Jews found themselves in a tragic predicament. To the conservatives, they were a disloyal and subversive element; to the radicals they represented a doomed social class. Neither group was prepared to allow them an environment in which to preserve their identity.

The anti-Semitism of the White armies during the Civil War forced Russia's Jews to seek the protection of the Communists, who, whatever their long-term designs, opposed pogroms and defended them from the rabble. This had the effect of branding Jews not only in Russia but also abroad as Communists. The immense popularity in the 1920's of the *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* was the direct consequence of the perception that Jews used Communism to realize their alleged ambition of destroying Christian society and taking over the world. Carried to Germany by Russian émigrés, this lunatic idea furnished Hitler with a rationale for his biological Judeophobia.

BUT although they protected Jews from violence and declared overt anti-Semitism a crime, the Communists espoused a program that promised slow death for Jews as a religious community and a nation. Measures outlawing private trade and manufacture, passed in the early years of the Soviet regime, undercut the economic base of Jewish life, creating millions of unemployed. The regime's anti-religious policies affected Jews no less than Christians: as early as 1919, synagogues and other religious buildings were made liable to confiscation. Hebrew was declared a foreign language and Zionism a subversive doctrine.

In the 1920's, especially during the relatively benign period of the New Economic Policy, Jews managed to circumvent many of the prohibitions on their economic and cultural activities. But all this came to an end in 1929 when Stalin undertook in earnest to realize Lenin's revolutionary agenda. Miss Levin chronicles in painful detail the process by which Jews were "productivized" by settlement on the land and employment in factories, denied any outlets for national identity, forced by economic necessity to scatter and intermarry. Although there are here none of the physical horrors of the Holocaust, the collective cry of a Jewish nation

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being choked to death is hardly less appalling.

By the time he entered into his alliance with Hitler in 1939, Stalin had restored many of the czarist discriminatory laws, setting quotas on access to educational and bureaucratic opportunities and closing altogether the more sensitive positions. He meant to go further. In 1942, as Germany's armies were deep on their murderous mission in the Soviet Union, Hitler confided to his associates that Stalin had promised Ribbentrop "he would oust the Jews from leading positions the moment he had sufficient qualified Gentiles with whom to replace them." Stalin's pledge to make his government *judenrein* was not only an attempt to rid himself of the image of "Jewish Bolshevism" which disturbed relations with the Fuehrer; it derived from a genuine belief that Jews were an enemy. Stalin complained that he could neither digest nor "spit out" his Jews—they were unassimilable and hence not to be tolerated. On the eve of his death, which did not come a moment too soon, he began to kill off the Jewish intelligentsia and to set in motion measures that clearly pointed to mass deportations of Jews to Siberia and Central Asia.

In the decades since Stalin's death his successors have done away with the most egregious manifestations of persecution, but discrimination against Jews remains in place. There are no Jews in the Politburo and hardly any in the upper echelons of the military. Strict quotas are imposed on admissions to institutions of higher learning. Gorbachev's reforms, which have eased Soviet discriminatory policies, have also allowed the emergence of overtly anti-Semitic movements, of which Pamyat is the most notorious. It is true that in recent elections to the Congress of People's Deputies, right-wing candidates fielded by such groups have failed to elect a single member. Still, there is deep fear among Russian Jewry that the general loosening of controls, while leading to a relaxation of pressures from above, will encourage the rise of anti-Jewish sentiments from below.

Hence very many Russian Jews see no future for themselves and their children, and if given a chance would emigrate. Recent Israeli estimates are that a continuation of Gorbachev's liberalized emigration policy might lead to the exodus of at least 500,000 Jews. A community which a century ago was not only the largest in the world but also culturally the most vibrant has been destroyed by a regime that many Jews in and out of Russia once regarded as a beacon of hope.

NORA LEVIN'S study combines admirable mastery of the material with deep sympathy for the people whose history it chronicles. Benjamin Pinkus's book suffers by comparison: although no less learned, it is written in a dry manner that conveys little of the pathos which the subject requires.

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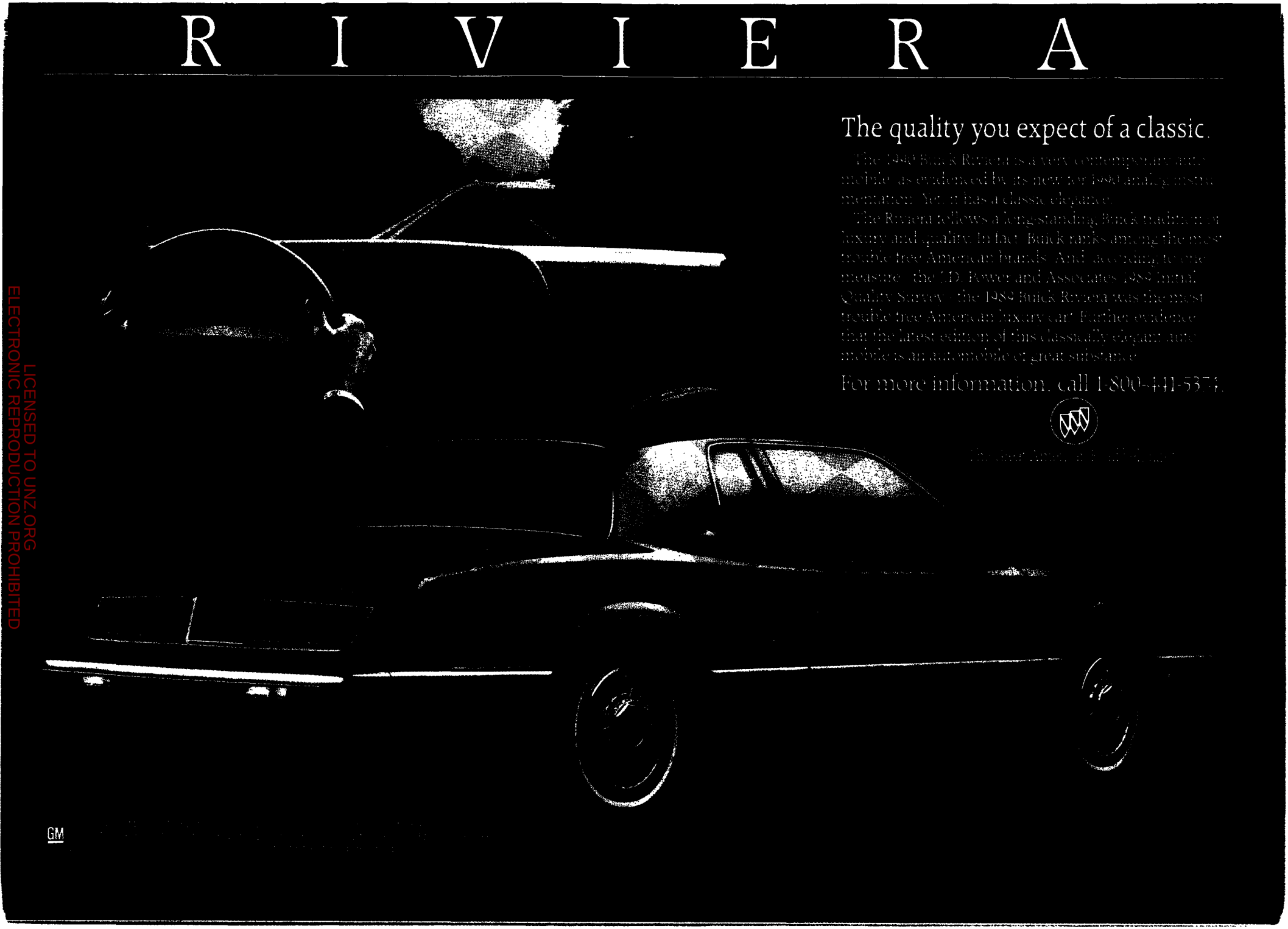

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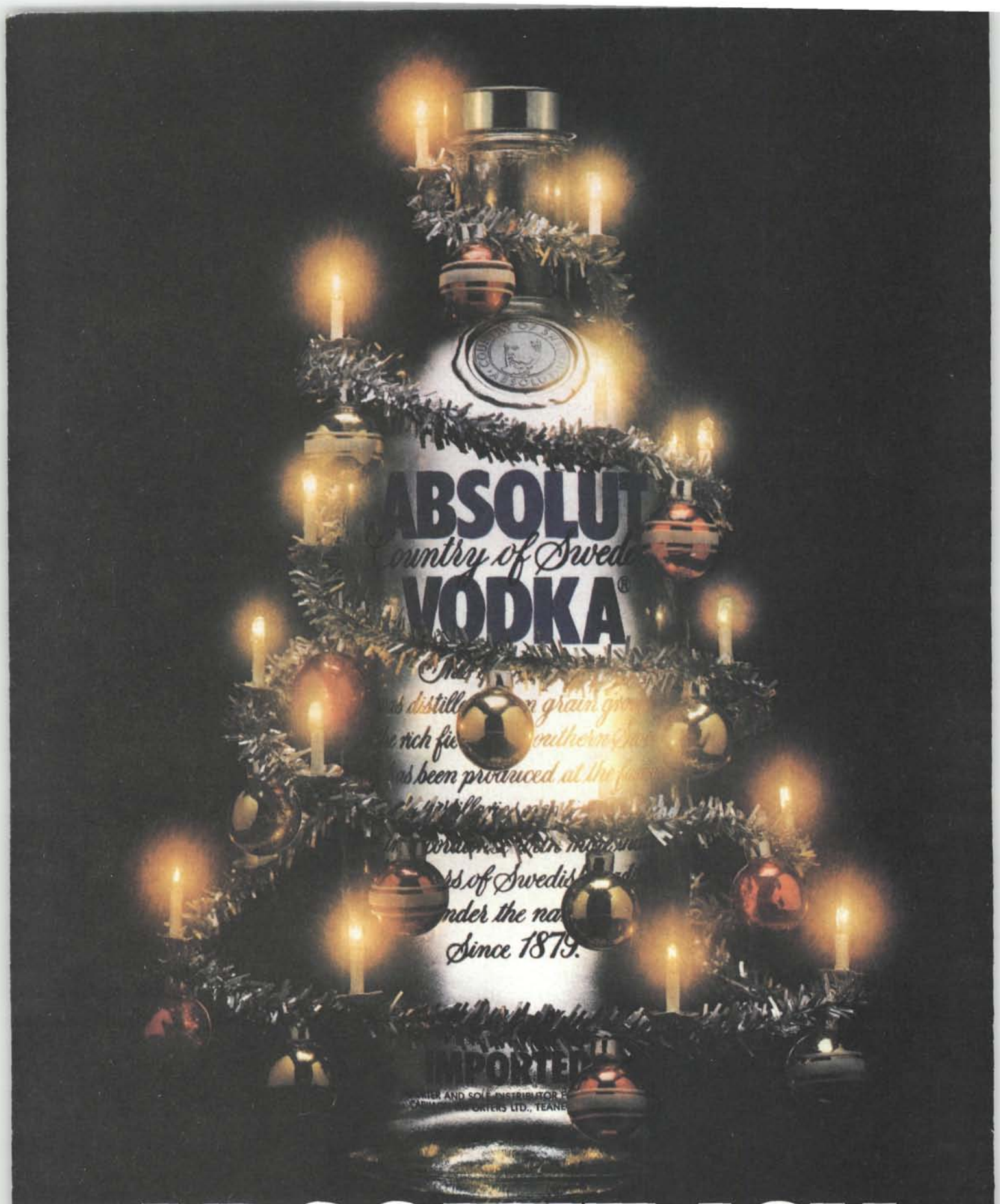

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